BLUE BOOK

APRIL MAGAZINE 25 Cents
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ADVENTURE • MYSTERY • ROMANCE • HUMOR

George Worts, S. Andrew Wood, Clarence Herbert New, Jay Lucas, H. Bedford-Jones, Roy Norton *and many others*

Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

Beat the Game!

SOME evening soon, perhaps as you are reading your magazine by the so-civilized comfort of a steam radiator, a sound from without will hurry you to the window—the faint far gallant trumpet-call of wild geese winging northward. And again you will wonder if this vaunted comfort—your radiator and your radio, your electric this, your automatic that and your mechanical the-other-thing—are worth while. Probably they are; but must we also lose so much of what that stirring intrepid marching-hymn of the air signifies?

Emerson said it: "In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods we return to reason and faith."

Some of us, of course, can now and then, and for abbreviated periods, return to reason and faith in those cathedral woods where that perennial festival is dressed. And all of us—if those fine faculties of imagination and memory which the relenting gods have granted this so-called human race are not atrophied—can beat this hard game of civilization through the simple inexpensive aid of a writer's magic.

In this issue, for example, Charles Brower's remarkable autobiography "My Arctic Outpost," Jay Lucas' fascinating excursion into prehistoric times "Warriors All," and divers other stories restore to you that precious wilderness heritage. And next month, besides further vivid chapters of "My Arctic Outpost" and other notable stories of the open, there will be a novel to which we wish to direct your special attention—"Flame in the Forest," by Harold Titus, the author of "Timber," "The Forest War" and other well-known novels.

SCENT of sun-warmed pine and balsam, of damp earth, of logs under the saw—and of powder-smoke; sound of myriad leaves whispering together, of water foaming white over dark rocks, of a woodsman's ax across a still lake—and of sudden gunfire; sight of birch-trees under the moon, of stars clean of the city's smoke-screen, of sun-shafts through interlaced branches—and of flame through the forest: these things Mr. Titus' novel brings to you. It brings also the acquaintance of men and women who will prove a real addition to your circle of friends.

Be sure to read this novel, and the many other stories in our forthcoming May issue which the arid philosophic polysyllables of this page are inadequate to describe.

—The Editor.

Amazing Little Book Saved 4 Lost Sales Worth $72 To Me!

TURNED down again! I would have sworn I had that sale "sewed up"—and now, for some reason I couldn't understand, I had mutfed it completely!

What was the matter with me? This wasn't the first time a nice, ripe, juicy sale has slipped through my fingers when I thought I had it in my grasp. On the contrary—it was happening all the time. What was I doing that was losing me order after order—what was I doing that was keeping me down in the plodder class—out of the big money I knew I ought to earn?

It was the end of the day, and I was going home. I picked up a magazine to read on the street car—and on the first page I turned to, I read the revelation I was looking for. On that page was the story of a man exactly like myself—with one difference. For he had discovered the mistakes which were keeping him poor—and he had also found the way to end them. I read with renewed interest, how one extraordinary little book, called "Mistakes Commonly Made In Selling" had given this fellow the tip he had needed.

A Fresh Chance At Success

"Mistakes Commonly Made In Selling!" I knew I was making plenty of mistakes. The book, I discovered, was being sent free to every man who asked for it. I tore out the coupon without delay, and mailed it in.

Well—I can't tell you here all the things I found in that slim little volume. But it amazed me. The first thing I did, almost, was to find mentioned in a casual way, one error which, I realized in a flash, I was constantly making. As a matter of fact, it was the mistake which, I knew now, had cost me that nice sale two days before, with its $18 commission. It had cost me several more sales that I could remember, in less than a week, for that matter. At the same time the book gave me the inspiration which took me back to those prospects—and showed me how to correct my mistake—and collect the order in four cases!

Amazing Simple Home Training

Of course, that little book wasn't enough, by itself, to make a successful salesman out of me. But that little tip, and the successful sales that followed, showed me what I could do if I could get rid of my worst errors. And I knew that I *could* end those mistakes forever. For with that little volume of "Mistakes" came another book called "The Key To Master Salesmanship"—more vitally interesting in its way, even, than the first book. It told me how thousands of men—men who had been considered total failures as salesmen—had through one simple training method, established themselves among America's highest-paid salesmen. It told how one institution—the National Salesmen's Training Association—is even taking men who never dreamed they could sell—and putting them in line for the biggest kind of sales positions.

Yet their method was the simplest in the world. You can readily believe, I enrolled for this training at once. After I began it, I found I was getting real results, within the first few lessons. Yet I spent no long tedious hours of study over theories. Instead, I put in a few minutes of study and comparison, for all practical purposes in daily conference with some of the finest sales brains in America—right in my own home.

Permanent Success At Last!

And today—well, my income is nearly five times as great as it was when I enrolled—and I work only about half as hard to get it. I am actually making out so well as a salesman, that I have recently turned down a flattering offer to become sales manager for a rival firm. But I would still be plodding along lucky to make $30 a week, if those two little books had not shown me the way out of the rut and up the ladder.

* * * * *

Two books—packed with dynamite from one cover to the other! A leading business expert has pronounced them "two of the most important books ever written for salesmen." For they lift the veils of foolish secrecy from salesmanship. They have, between them, blasted scores of the old-fashioned ideas about selling and selling methods. To literally thonsands, they have meant the difference between ill-paid slavery, in "two-by-four" selling jobs, or in offices and factories. Even men with good-sized salaries have found in these two books the inspiration that increased their pay into the twenty-thousand dollar class.

Yet these two books are now FREE. They cost you nothing, if you are ambitious, and really want to make a lasting success in salesmanship.

Send for them today. Learn why some salesmen are wasting their lives—hampered by ignorance of the fundamentals of successful selling. Learn, too, how thousands of others have turned their blind ploddings into brilliant and well-paid sales genius. They may well do as much for you, as they have for these thousands of others. No obligation—mail the coupon now.

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The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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HAROLD TITUS

HE has written several specially attractive books about the North Woods lumber country he knows and loves so well—"The Forest War," "Timber," and others. A new story, which we think the best even he has ever produced, appears in our next—the May—issue. Watch for it under the title:

"Flame in the Forest"

THE McCALL COMPANY, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

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DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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A NEW PLAN FOR

Real Experience Stories

FOR over five years we have been printing stories of real experience—stories based on the belief that nearly everyone's experience includes at least one episode so unusual and dramatic as to deserve description in print. With this idea in mind, we each month have offered five prizes of one hundred dollars each for the five best stories of real experience submitted to us. It is our impression that our readers have much enjoyed this feature of the magazine.

We have come to feel, however, that there is a certain injustice in the conditions of our offer. For stories are not like sugar or flour, to be appraised and purchased by the pound, at a definite rate. Some are inherently of a higher quality than others; some can be told adequately in a thousand words; some can with difficulty be compressed into four thousand words.

For these reasons we have decided to alter the plan a little: We shall be pleased to receive and to print stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of the five best of these received each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, from $50 to $150. We hope in this way to present to our readers an even more attractive department, and to reward a little more fairly those readers who contribute their real experiences to us. The other conditions of our offer remain as before. To recapitulate:

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable. A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. It is our hope that the new readers of the magazine will also offer their most interesting experiences to this department.

"Hotels Need Trained Men"

Says C. H. Garard

Who, without previous experience, became a Restaurant Manager in 5 weeks and is now General Manager of a beautiful Country Club.

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A One-Shot Capture

A British soldier who rose from the ranks to a commission and won the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Gallipoli, tells of the strange capture of a German pill-box.

A Prize Story of Real Experience

By JOHN H. SUGDEN

SOME of the greatest obstacles to the advance of the Allied Forces in France and Flanders were the pill-boxes constructed by the Germans.

These pill-boxes were immense structures built up either outside or inside some already existing building, such as a factory, farm, engineering works or brick works. From the demolished buildings were taken all the steel and iron parts such as girders, and steel shaftings, with the addition of concrete to form walls and roofs of immense thickness capable of withstanding the direct hits of heavy high-explosive shells.

The only entrance was from the rear, that is, facing the enemy and the fronts and sides were loopholed and slotted to allow machine-guns to traverse and spray the attacking forces with lead.

The taking of a German pill-box was a gigantic undertaking requiring the coöperation of the artillery, which in deluging these reinforced-concrete fortresses with gas and liquid-fire shells, sufficiently subdued their occupants until the infantry could get near enough to bomb them into surrender.

This always entailed great loss of life to friend and enemy alike, for the pill-boxes were mutually supporting and almost impregnable—so the capture of one of them at the cost of only one cartridge is a feat worthy of being placed on record.

In September, 1917, my battalion was in front of Ypres holding the eastern slope from Westhoek Ridge down to a canal just south of the St. Julien Railway. We were in occupation of all the captured pill-boxes on the near side of this canal, with the exception of one called Sans Souci.

As the canal had withstood four years of intense bombardment from friend and enemy in turn it was really a quagmire; woe betide whoever fell into it, as the mud was of the consistency of soft butter and the canal was impassable unless bridged. Now, under these circumstances, it was reasonable to suppose that the enemy had evacuated Sans Souci, because otherwise their line of retreat would be cut by this impassable canal.

In this case we wished to occupy it for the shelter it afforded and also because it would bring us nearer to the enemy where, paradoxically enough, we should be safe—as the artillery of both sides seemed to have only a hazy idea where the front lines were, and ranged their guns on the back areas.

Although vulnerable from the enemy side we could convert the pill-box to our own use rather than remain in the open in water-logged shell-holes, while the marshy canal would prove an obstacle to any counter-attack.

Photo by Mrs. Sugden

Lt. John H. Sugden, D.C.M., M.M.

It was first of all necessary to make a reconnaissance before attempting to occupy it; as scout sergeant this was my duty.

In the event of its being unoccupied it would be taken over by an officer and six men who would be awaiting us in No. 1 Advanced Post at 2300 (11 P. M.).

If weakly held, the scouts would coöperate with the officer's party in the attack upon it, and hold it until we were relieved by the next battalion, due at midnight. If strongly held, we were to leave it.

During the day I kept observation on Sans Souci; the only thing of importance that I could discover was that there was a machine-gun emplacement in a corner of the broken-down hedge which surrounded the pill-box. This, by night, would serve as their outpost position as it commanded a sunken road leading down from the ridge to the canal and passing through No. 1 and No. 2 advanced posts.

Just before 2300 (11 P. M.), we moved off to No. 1 Post to leave the officer's party there until we had the required information.

I asked the sergeant in charge whether he had observed anything by day, and if he had any patrols out.

His answer was emphatic: "No fear! We daren't show our heads by day on account of Jerry's planes. We have to hide under our ground-sheets and there are no patrols out, as nobody could move over the ground in front of us."

This presumedly impassable nature of the ground had given the sergeant a false sense of security.

Before we left this post the sergeant reminded me that No. 2 post might have a patrol out; we had to make sure of this, as patrols must be withdrawn when scouts were out, to avoid the danger of a clash.

The sergeant of No. 2 informed me that he had a patrol out which he would withdraw. As I knew that infantry patrols never ventured far out and our time was getting short, I decided not to await the patrol's return and we moved off—myself, with a corporal and a private, along the sunken road toward the machine-gun position. Leaving the other two to cover fire for me, I crept to the corner of the hedge, and, when near enough, rushed the position, only to find it unoccupied. This gave me to understand that the pill-box also was unoccupied, so we all got through the hedge into the enclosure.

Keeping the hedge on our left, we now moved down to the side of the pill-box and when almost there we discovered a gap leading to the sunken road. This would threaten our rear; so I posted the man to watch it and was just moving to the corner of the pill-box about ten yards away when I was astonished to hear a loud shuffling of feet. It was neither the sound of marching nor crawling, and I jumped to the conclusion that No. 2 patrol had not been withdrawn but had gone round Sans Souci.

There was now grave danger of a clash unless I could make certain in time—so, warning the corporal to cover fire for me, I got to the corner nearest the canal and just as I arrived the enemy sent up flares.

Their light showed up the men in front of me but left me in deep shadow; I could see by the shape of their tin hats that they were a body of the enemy about fifty strong—with bayonets fixed, and "dressing" up into position. Even so it was difficult to realize the significance of these fifty men being outside the pill-box, and I was just about to retire with the information that the enemy were holding the position in full force when I saw one of the Germans coming toward us. As I was hidden by the corner I allowed him to pass me, knowing that the others would have him under observation.

He made for the gap in the hedge, but seeing the private guarding it he was taken by surprise and tried to retire, but before he could rejoin the others the corporal shot him, and as he fell he screamed.

The fifty Germans round the corner

stampeded and as they were on a narrow path between the pill-box and the canal there was no room for them to move without pushing one another into the swampy canal where they would smother. They tried to launch bombs which evidently they were holding in readiness, but they only succeeded in killing each other.

The corporal's uniform was torn and my chin was slightly cut, but we suffered no other hurt and before we could do anything ourselves we were astonished to see another thirty Germans retiring in the light of their own flares. In starting from No. 2 Post we had evidently passed round their flank which rested on the sunken road and they were almost on top of No. 1 Post. Our shot had stampeded them also and they retired as far as the canal bank, but could get no farther as we were holding their flank and cutting off their retreat and they were unaware of our weakness.

To avoid the danger of carrying anything that rattled we had started out each with one round only in the breach and none in the magazine; neither did we wear our bayonets, which would have been only a hindrance. The one round was meant to give the alarm rather than to fight, which latter was not our duty when *"en reconnaissance."*

As we had only two rounds left between the three of us I immediately sent the private to No. 1 post to tell the officer and men to come at once, which he did, bringing along with him some of the relief which was just arriving.

We encircled the pill-box and found that the Germans—who all along were in a panic thinking they had been ambushed—were dead and wounded, all excepting those who had tried to escape over a temporary plank foot-bridge and had been pushed into the canal by their comrades. The thirty on the canal bank were uninjured and all surrendered.

IT appears that Sans Souci had been evacuated, but the enemy having seen we were not occupying it were using it as a jumping-off place for a "bomb-and-bayonet" attack. The thirty bombers were already in position in front of No. 1 post.

Their scout whom we shot, was going to see if all was ready and at a prearranged signal the bombers would launch their bombs and the bayonet men would rush up the sunken road to assist them. If we had not come across them when we did they would certainly have penetrated our position, retiring with prisoners and information, or served as a spear-head for a wider breach, as there would be no point in such a small party staying on our side of the canal without reinforcement.

Or, on the other hand, if we had started from No. 1 post as I had intended doing, we should almost certainly have been killed or captured, for in view of the Sergeant's statement that the ground in front was impassable we might have used less caution—and even if we had seen the enemy in position in time, it would only have precipitated the action.

The fact that the shot was *from the rear* had had the effect of paralyzing them.

This was actually my last night on that front, as a few days later I was sent to England for a commission.

Additional prize stories of Real Experience will be found beginning on page 121 of this issue.

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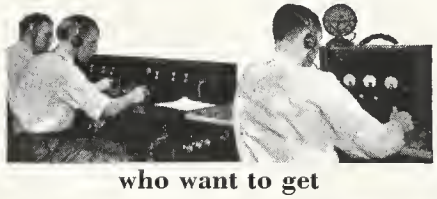

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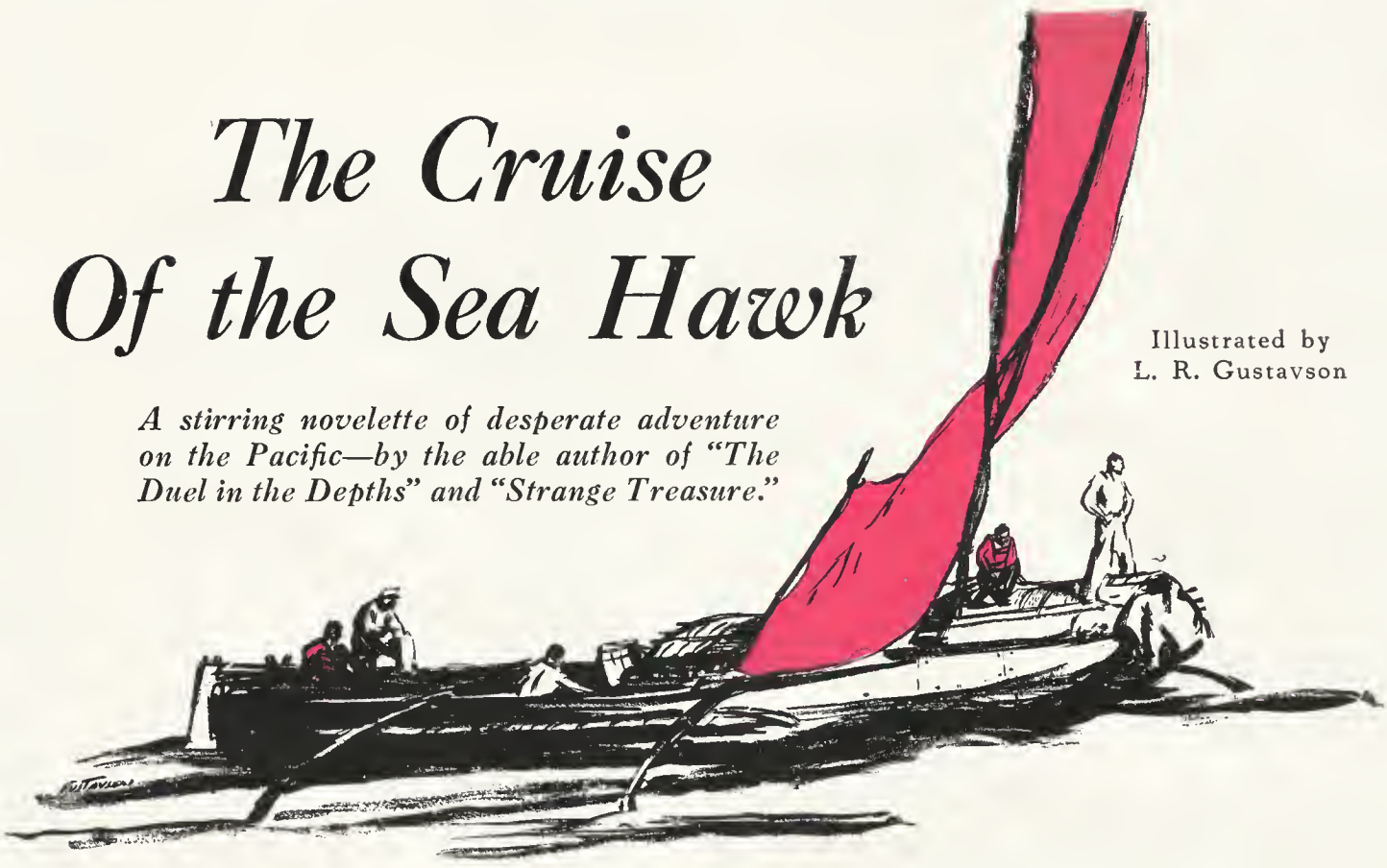


Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

BURCK had been only three days in Manila, when his astonishing callers arrived.

The newspapers had now forgotten him. For a day they had made great fuss over Burck, the sole surviving officer of the *Mindanao,* who had got the few passengers away safely in his boat after she crashed on a reef in the Sulu Sea. The line had cabled him money and passage home to San Francisco on the next boat, which would leave in a fortnight; and after scouting about vainly for a berth, Second Officer Burck had about decided to go on home.

Then came the knock at the door of his very modest hotel room.

It was a fateful knock, and struck Burck at a fateful moment. He was looking over a newspaper clipping and trying to recognize himself in the "quiet, forceful young officer whose determined yet modest demeanor had brought him fame." This was fetching an amused grin out of him, when the knock came.

"Come in," he said, laying the clipping aside and resuming his pipe.

To his surprise, the door opened to reveal a pair of strangers, men in tailored whites, carrying malacca sticks, giving a distinct impression of prosperity, even affluence. The larger of the two men entered, as Burck came to his feet—a heavy-set man, yet looking like solid muscle, with a heavy jaw, a heavy toothbrush mustache, and heavy black eyes under bushy brows. Altogether, a man of force.

"Is this Mr. Burck?" he asked. "Late second officer of the *Mindanao?*"

"The same," responded Burck. "Come in, will you?"

"Thanks. Have you time to discuss a little matter of business?"

"All the time there is," Burck replied cheerfully.

"Good. My name is Crayton, Hamilton Crayton," and the large man, speaking with a rather impressive air. "I'm interested in an importing business here in Manila, and this is one of my partners, Mr. Cottier."

Burck shook hands. Cottier was a small, shaggy man, with a large off-color diamond in his cravat and an effusive, impudent manner. He grasped Burck's hand cordially.

"Pleased to meetcha, Mister," he exclaimed, pumping the hand hard. "Read a lot about you in the papers. Proud to have this here right hand in the hand of Ed Cottier—"

"Dry up!" snapped Crayton, and Mr. Cottier subsided, with a wink at Burck and a grimace of mock fear.

Rather amused, Burck seated his visitors and resumed his pipe.

"Well, gentlemen?" he observed.

Crayton took out a greenish Dutch cheroot, lit it, and produced some papers from his pocket.

"Ran you down through the underwriters," he stated, while his companion cast swift, birdlike glances around the room. "You see, I should explain that our firm expected to receive some very valuable goods aboard your ship. I might say that your late master, Captain Horne, was a very good personal friend of mine; his loss has been a severe blow to me."

Burck said nothing. He did not care particularly for Mr. Cottier's looks, and the more he saw of Mr. Crayton, the less he felt inclined to trust that gentleman. As for Captain Horne, he knew perfectly well that the old skipper of the *Mindanao* was a dissolute rascal who would certainly have lost his ticket if he had not gone down with the ship he had piled up.

"I want to ask you, sir," went on Crayton, his black eyes boring into Burck, "whether you would consider help-

ing us in a perfectly legitimate piece of work which should not require two weeks' time, but which we'll call a month to be on the safe side. I'm prepared to offer you one thousand dollars, gold, and all expenses. As the matter must be confidential, I'll not go into details unless you'd be at least open to consider it."

Burck sucked at his pipe. A thousand dollars—well, he certainly needed the money! And he could get a month's leave of absence from the line, easily; he had leave overdue him now.

On the other hand, that was too much of a price to receive for honest work. And in the dark eye of Crayton he detected a glint which belied that gentleman's talk of legitimacy. He found Cottier, too, watching him with the intentness of a rat-terrier over a hole.

"I'm open to consider it," he said quietly, and met Crayton's gaze with a whimsical twinkle in his gray eyes. "But I'll say frankly that I'll go in for nothing shady—and the sum you mention makes the thing look suspicious."

Mr. Cottier slapped his thigh and uttered a hearty laugh.

"Stow me if he aint a sharp un! I said it'd look raw to him, didn't I just? Didn't I say you'd have to make it plain—"

"Dry up!" said Crayton. The tone in which he said it, the sudden flash in his heavy features, gave Burck a new angle on the man—a hint of brutality that made him whistle to himself. Strictly to himself. Then Crayton turned to him, with a broad smile.

"Cottier's right, Mister. I know it may look bad, but I'll put it before you. We've been keeping the cables warm today; an hour ago I received acceptance of my offer, and here's the paper to prove it. I've bought the wreck of the *Mindanao* from the underwriters."

WITH an air of triumph, he produced a paper which Burck inspected critically. It was genuine, he perceived. As he frowned over it, remembering his own report of the wreck, a total loss, with her cargo of machinery and sugar undoubtedly ruined, he tried vainly to understand why Crayton had bought the wreck.

"She's no good to you," he said bluntly. "Nothing in her worth having."

"So we figured from your report, Mr. Burck,"—and Crayton chuckled.

Then he turned and jerked his head at Cottier, with all the air of a man giving orders which he expected to see obeyed at once.

"Run along," he said flatly. "Tell Cromly to close the deal for that vinta we were looking over, and have the skipper ready with her at two bells in the morning watch. Tide's on the ebb then, and we can get off. Move!"

Mr. Cottier came sharply to his feet and stuck out his hand at Burck.

"Glad to've met you, Mister," he said. "See you later, I hope. So long!"

Burck said nothing until the door had closed; then he gave Crayton a look.

"Well, you're rid of him," he observed. "So come out with it! Trying to tell me you're no seaman, eh? Better put your cards on the table if you want to do any business with me. If you're no seaman, I'm the man in the moon! Let's talk turkey or else quit."

"Right," said Crayton coolly, no whit abashed by this bluntness. "I've done a bit of yachting now and then, and one or two of my associates have knocked around a bit; by *seaman,* I mean a man with an officer's ticket. None of us have that, and you have. I read in the papers that you'd recently passed for your master's license. Besides, you know the exact position of the *Mindanao*—your report stated that she lay in four fathoms, barely covered, broken in two."

"Correct enough," said Burck. "Yes, I have a master's ticket; and let me tell you that I don't intend to have any blots on it, either, by mixing up in anything underhand."

"You won't!" Crayton looked at him with direct, bold eyes. "We're chartering a vinta—which as you probably know is a native sailing craft, and fast. We want you to take command of her and take us to the wreck—which belongs to us legally. Certain of our goods can be salvaged without much damage, and they'll well repay us. That's the whole thing, Mister, with all cards on the table. As for Cottier and the others—well, I'm running this show."

Meeting that arrogant, challenging gaze, Burck believed that the man spoke the truth. At the same time, he felt convinced that there was something more to all this than showed on the surface. There was little or nothing in the wreck worth salvaging, yet Crayton had paid the underwriters a good round sum for this total loss. Why?

Still, it was not Burck's place to argue his employer's motives. The thing was legal enough, and he needed the money.

"What do you say?" asked Crayton. "If you accept, we leave early in the morning."

"Right," said Burck, with a nod of decision. "You're on. Half the price in advance, the balance on return here. And it's understood that I'm to be master of your vinta—you to be in charge of all salvage operations."

"Fair enough," said Crayton promptly. "There's a native master and crew, but they'll be under your orders. I've the cash with me— What's the matter?"

Burck had come up out of his chair, one hand upraised in caution. He caught the sound again—a slightly creaking board outside his door. He had heard that sound too many times, heralding the coming of newspaper men and visitors; but there was no knock now. Some sneaking native *mozo* of the hotel, perhaps, prying and listening.

With a quick, lithe step, Burck was at the door and jerked it open, thoroughly angered. A man stooping at the keyhole, caught unawares, nearly fell forward—a red-haired, ratty, vicious little man. As he straightened up, Burck's fist knocked him backward against the opposite wall of the corridor.

A second figure appeared out of nowhere in plunging attack, landing a stiff jolt to the belt. Burck took it, swung on the man—a thin, gangling fellow of astonishing agility—and next instant had a fight on his hands. He was hammered back into the doorway, but got in one lucky jab that staggered his opponent, and then sent one over to the button. The tall fellow went rocking away, and Burck saw the red-head leaping at him with a knife.

Then a voice came roaring forth behind Burck, and at sound of it the two stiffened in instant obedience.

"Stow all that! Back up there, you lousy swabs! You, Carty—put up that knife or I'll drop you! And Callahane—damn your dirty hide, what are you doing here?"

To his amazement, Burck divined that his visitor knew these two men. He stepped aside as Crayton filled the doorway, a surging tide of passion darkening his heavy features.

The two men gaped at him, and Carty put up his knife; then Callahane, holding his sore jaw, lurched forward and responded:

"Comin' with a message from Cromly, sir—"

Crayton hurled a stream of angered profanity at him. "Why the devil didn't you come with it, then, instead of listening at keyholes? You packet-rats—"

With an effort, he controlled himself. Carty touched his red forelock and spoke meekly.

"Sorry, sir—we wasn't sure if it was the right room, and I was by way of takin' a peek at the inside; that's all of it. Cromly says, sir, would you be wanting cabin stores put aboard that vinta if you take her?"

Crayton cursed him. "Yes! And right away, too—we're leaving with the morning tide. I've sent Cottier to tell him we'd hire her; you see about the stores. Clear out, blast you! This is Mr. Burck, who'll be master of her—and I hope to hell that he keel-hauls the both of you tomorrow! Clear out!"

Burck caught one sharp, venomous look from Carty; then the pair of them scuttled away. He turned to Crayton with a whimsical expression.

"More of your business associates, I suppose?"

Crayton nodded, and closed the door again as they reëntered the room.

"Yes," he replied. "I needed money to put the business on its feet, and took in anyone who had a bit of brass. My whole crowd's going along, you see—making a sort of holiday of the trip; and some of them may come in useful, at that. This Callahane is an expert diver, and had a good bit of experience in the pearl-beds. I've seen him down for nearly two minutes at a stretch. I must apologize for their lack of manners—too bad! However, you'll find they're not a bad lot at all."

"I'm not worried," said Burck dryly, and accepted the bank-notes that Crayton counted out to him—five hundred dollars in gold certificates.

"Shall I pick you up here in the morning?" said Crayton, pocketing his papers and taking up his hat and stick. "I'll be going by this way with a gharry anyhow—"

"If it won't crowd you, sure," said Burck.

So, with a hearty handshake, Crayton departed. Burck sank back into his chair when the door had closed and held a match to his dead pipe. He grimaced through the smoke.

"So that's that!" he reflected musingly. "And you and your business associates are one bad lot, or I miss my guess! There's something fishy in all this, but hanged if I can put a finger on it. However—it's all in the day's work! And now I'd better cable for my leave of absence."

He departed hurriedly. It never occurred to him that there might be anything interesting in the fact that the names of Crayton and his "business associates" all began with the same letter. . . .

Owing to the difference in time, Burck received an answering cable giving him his leave, before seven o'clock, and five minutes later was on his way to dinner, with everything set. He ran into Jim Wells, of the underwriters' office, and they dropped in at a Chinese place for dinner. Once seated, Burck questioned his companion as to Crayton.

"Huh! We wanted to know about that bird too," said Wells. "You heard he'd bought the wreck of your ship I s'pose?"

Burck nodded, and the other grunted again.

"Well, there's something crooked about it, but we don't know what, so we put through the deal regardless and let her go. This Crayton has been here about a year, off and on, with his crowd. They're said to be shady; that's rumor, of course—comes through the compradors. know there's nothing definite against 'em. They've put over one or two slick deals, and the outfit is called the High Seas—all their names begin with *C*, if you get me."

"Seamen?" queried Burck.

Wells shrugged.

"Search me. I imagine they are. Crayton was in the office yesterday on this deal when Cap'n Fargo dropped in—just up from Sandakan. They looked at each other, and old Fargo sort of snarled. That was all. But it gave me a notion Crayton and his outfit might have been working down Borneo way."

Burck said nothing of his acquaintance with the outfit, and the subject was dropped. . . .

That night, however, Burck sat alone with his pipe and thought the matter out. Wells had told him enough to confirm his suspicions; no doubt about it, he had been somehow hooked by a fine set of rascals. Business associates—a bit of yachting—making a holiday of the trip—an expert diver! As fragments of Crayton's suave talk came back to him, he grinned sourly.

He could back out, of course; yet it was not Burck's way to back out. He preferred to go ahead and smash through somehow, regardless. His idea was that the crab seldom wins a fight, and life is mostly fights of one sort or another. So, after thinking the matter over, he chose deliberately to go ahead.

"My hands are clear," he thought, as he packed his duffle-bag. "If there's something slimy going on, it's not my funeral. They can't make me the goat for anything. And if for once they're playing a straight game, as seems to be the case, I'd be a fool to quit cold. Besides which they're playing me for a fool, they've lied like hell to me, and I'm sitting right in the game and drawing cards."

He turned in, unworried, and was up for an early breakfast. . . .

Crayton turned up with a carriage, and Burck bundled in beside him. Twenty minutes later, by the steering-sweep of a half-decked vinta, Burck rather sardonically surveyed his "business associates" while the Moro skipper and his crew worked the craft out of harbor. Besides those whom he had previously met, he was seeing the fifth man, Cromly, for the first time, and found him a person of interest, as Crayton introduced them.

A stockily built man, Cromly had a bulging forehead, pale and watery blue eyes, a ragged mustache that half-hid a whisky mouth, and an affected manner. He held Burck's hand, gazed into his eyes, and spoke with slow precision.

"I am most happy to meet you, sir; I have heard of you. I am the vice-president and junior partner of our enterprise. No man knows better than I the sterling qualities of our beloved Mr. Crayton—we call him Cap'n, by way of informality; and I take pleasure in welcoming you to the company of the—"

"Stow it," commanded Crayton, but Burck smiled and spoke up quickly.

"To the company of the High Seas outfit, eh? Well, let's hope for luck all around."

His use of the term produced a startling effect. Cromly gaped at him. Crayton gave him one sharp, almost suspicious look. Cottier whirled around and shot a hand to his waist as if to clutch a weapon. The gangling Callahane stared with bulging eyes. Red-haired Carty crouched and looked like a snake about to strike.

"What d'you mean by that, Mister?" big Crayton demanded bluntly. Burck chuckled.

"Well, anything wrong with it? That's the term usually applied to your outfit, I understand. No offense, I hope?"

"None intended, none given," spoke up Cottier, and fingered his yellowish diamond. "You're all right; and lemme tell you that Ed Cottier is for you. *Seguro, si!* Well, let's get settled and shook down, all hands. Cromly, where's our quarters?"

"Stow all that! You, Carty, put up that knife!"

Cromly woke up. "Double cabins under the half-deck," he announced. "They are not luxurious, but there's room for all. The native crew sleeps anywhere. Come along, and I'll show you."

The *Sea Hawk*, as the vinta was named, was half-decked, with small and stuffy cabins, one of which Burck shared with Crayton. His bag disposed of, he looked over the craft with interest, astonished by her remarkable speed, for he estimated that she must be doing close to twenty knots. It was thanks to the speed of their craft, indeed, that the Moros were so long enabled to resist the Spanish conquest.

She was large for her type, being a forty-footer—extremely narrow in build, with a wide outrigger on either side, longer than the craft itself. The huge single sail was almost square on its tripod mast, and the whole craft was wrought from rattan and pegged planks.

There was no deck cabin. Burck found that Crayton was supplied with charts, and when he had laid out a course, he found that his responsibility was finished. The master of the vinta was an alert little Moro, who looked over the chart and announced they would reach their destination within three days—depending upon the wind, since her best sailing quality was reached before the wind.

"I don't see," said Crayton, as he stretched out aft with Burck, "just how Cap'n Horne managed to lay up the *Mindanao* as he did. Your story laid the blame on that typhoon—but looked to me like you had covered him up a bit."

"I did," admitted Burck. "The plain facts were that Horne was a drunken swine all the way from Canton. Never showed his nose on deck once. That old hooker was fit for the boneyard, and her engines were no good. Before we struck, Horne came up to the bridge, drunk as a lord, and chased everyone off with his gun—claimed pirates were aboard. He slammed her into the reefs, and there we were. Three of the boats got away, but the others were swamped. Mine pulled through, by luck, with our few passengers aboard."

"Hm!" said Crayton. "Luck, maybe. Horne didn't say anything to you about his cargo?"

"He wouldn't be apt to," returned Burck, a little surprised. He shot a glance at the other, but Crayton's heavy features were noncommittal.

Once out of Manila Bay, the vinta headed southward with the wind behind her, and fled across the water like a frightened thing, at amazing speed. Burck made no attempt to interfere with the native master, for at this stage he was little better than a passenger. Crayton went comfortably to sleep; the others napped or shook dice. From their looks, Burck judged that they had made a night of it and had brought plenty of rum aboard. Cottier, indeed, and the lanky Callahane were both drinking heavily even now. What with duffle-bags and cabin stores, the scanty space aboard the craft was well filled. Carty, it appeared, was the cook and steward of the outfit—and an excellent cook he was, too.

With no weather threatening, the big vinta promised to have an easy and swift run of it. Early in the afternoon, Burck clawed his way up into the bow and was talking with the Moro skipper, when Callahane came lurching along. He caught Burck by the arm, peered into his face, and nodded with owlish solemnity.

"Mister," he said confidentially, "you're all right. I wanted to tell ye so—wanted to let ye know I don't bear no hard feelin's, savvy? You ask Cap'n Crayton about me, see? Me'n him's been shipmates goin' on four year. He knows I aint much on eddication, but my heart's in the right place—that's me, Mister. So it's all right about yesterday."

"Sure, it's all right," said Burck. "Forget about it."

"You an' me are pals, Mister," went on Callahane. "And you watch out for that red-headed runt, savvy? Bad med'cine, Carty is. By gosh, I seen him knife a woman down in Sandakan one time—that's the kind *he* is! He ripped her up with his knife, he did. And y'know about that French feller over to Sarawak, and how we durned near all got hanged for it. So keep your eye peeled, and if you need any help, you just call me in, savvy?"

Burck assured the man of his friendship, and the half-maudlin Callahane went aft again. A woman in Sandakan—and a Frenchman in Sarawak, eh? Indications were mounting up! But it was evident Callahane's visit had been noted and that an eye was being kept on things, for when Burck went aft, Crayton at once engaged him in conversation and asked about what the man had said.

"When that fool Callahane gets a little liquor in him," said Crayton confidentially, "he gets the queerest notions you ever saw—all about fighting and so forth! Did he spill any of that stuff?"

"Nope," said Burck cheerfully. "He merely assured me of his undying friendliness. Diver, is he? What's Cromly?"

"Him?" Crayton glanced at the sleeping figure of his

lieutenant. "Well, he started out to be a preacher, but never finished—went into island trading instead, I believe. He keeps books, he does. And look at Cottier, there! Looks like a Scotch terrier, eh? You'd never guess it, but he's a brainy man, little Ed is!" Crayton waxed enthusiastic. "Yes sir, used to be a skilled engraver in Shanghai, he did, and had a fine business too, but those slick Chinese wanted him out of their way, and they framed him, and the French nearly sent him to Noumea for forging their blasted yellow bank-notes—Ed just did slip away in time. That sort of took the heart out of him, though; I'm hoping now he'll get a fresh start in life. He deserves it."

Burck made no comment, and Crayton let the subject drop.

With evening, Burck relieved the Moro master, the wind held steady, and the *Sea Hawk* went hurtling onward. To Burck there was something magical in her speed, her frailty that could yet withstand the stoutest seas, and her excellent steering qualities. At midnight the Moro took over the command anew, and Burck turned in. The whole expedition had about it a happy-go-lucky air, an apparent absence of formality or even authority. Yet Burck sensed that this was deceptive. He perceived that Crayton's companions gave him implicit obedience, as though they stood in very real awe of him—and on the following morning he saw at least one reason for this.

Cromly, seated near the steersman in the stern, was busily writing in a small notebook when Callahane approached him with a rum-bottle and insisted on giving him a drink. Cromly refused; whereat Callahane tried to jerk him to his feet with a demand that he drink. Cromly flew into a rage, smashed Callahane between the eyes—and the gangling rascal dropped the bottle and lit into him with both fists.

Upon the pair of them descended Crayton, like a silent whirlwind. He literally hurled the two men apart with bull-like strength, hit Callahane one smashing blow under the belt that doubled him up in agony, and whirled on Cromly.

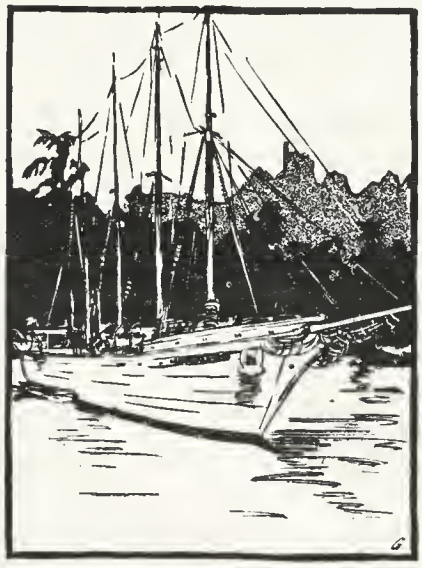
"Get every bottle that's aboard here and dump it over—move!"

"What's that, Cap'n?" called Carty. "Hey, we aint done nothing—"

"One more word out of you, and I'll lay you with Callahane!" said Crayton, and the little man hurriedly scrambled away.

Burck watched while the liquor was searched out and hove over the side. The others watched also, but in resigned silence; it was easy to see Crayton had these men of his cowed and unprotesting. No word more was said, but Burck remained thoughtful for a long while afterward. Crayton, he perceived, had a big background behind him—and he wondered anew just what it could be.

He was destined to find out, to a certain extent, most unexpectedly. . . .



The Santa Cruz Shoal, which has been so charted, probably, because discovered by some old Spanish galleon of that same name, was sighted late in the afternoon of the third day out.

Almost awash at high tide, the major portion of the shoal presented nothing to sight except dribblings of barren coral rock. The largest of these, the only one of any size, was a small islet a quarter-mile long and a few hundred feet across, absolutely bare. Off on the northern horizon appeared two dots—the Brothers, themselves mere deserted coral reefs. As Crayton observed with satisfaction, they had the place to themselves, for except in turtle-fishing season no natives came here.

With Burck in charge, the vinta made her perilous way among the long hidden reefs and shoals, to the islet. Here Crayton wanted to land their store of water and food at once; the coral scrap would be washed clean in event of a storm, but if weather brewed, Crayton would not remain here anyway. As Burck pointed out, the wreck of the *Mindanao* was a full half-mile distant, and they determined to get ashore for the night and locate the wreck in the morning.

In the sunset glare they reached the island, and while Crayton put his men to work getting the stuff ashore, Burck walked about the coral, glad to stretch his legs, He was more than ever puzzled about the plans of his employer. The vinta had very little cargo space, carried no diving equipment or tackle, and for the life of him Burck could not see how Crayton could profit out of this trip, unless it were a mere exploratory voyage. And the *Mindanao* had certainly carried no specie or anything else of much value in small compass.

Before dark, the white coral sand had been covered with mats and converted into a very comfortable camp, and Carty was hard at work cooking over a spirit-lamp. Burck rejoined the others and remained more silent than usual; the knowledge that here among these reefs lay his late ship and those aboard her, was depressing. The meal over, and darkness settled upon the sea, he lighted his pipe and strolled off across the islet.

Coming upon a deep sand-stretch, he made himself comfortable—sat smoking and watching the phosphorescent surf thundering along the reefs in lines of luminous white under the stars, and presently drowsed off. Some little time afterward he came awake, with a start—a voice had sounded, close to hand.

"You lousy swab, lay off that talk!" it growled. "You leave the Cap'n run this show. You're too blasted smart anyhow. Who was it helped you slip your cable out o' Shanghai, huh, when them frogs had you up for forgin' bank-notes?"

"That's all right, Cromly," came the voice of Cottier, no longer effusive but now rather whining. "I aint forgetting it was the Cap'n helped me out o' that jam. Only, I'm sayin' that this fella Burck had ought to be spiked the minute we pull the trick. We'd be fools to leave him go to blow around about this job."

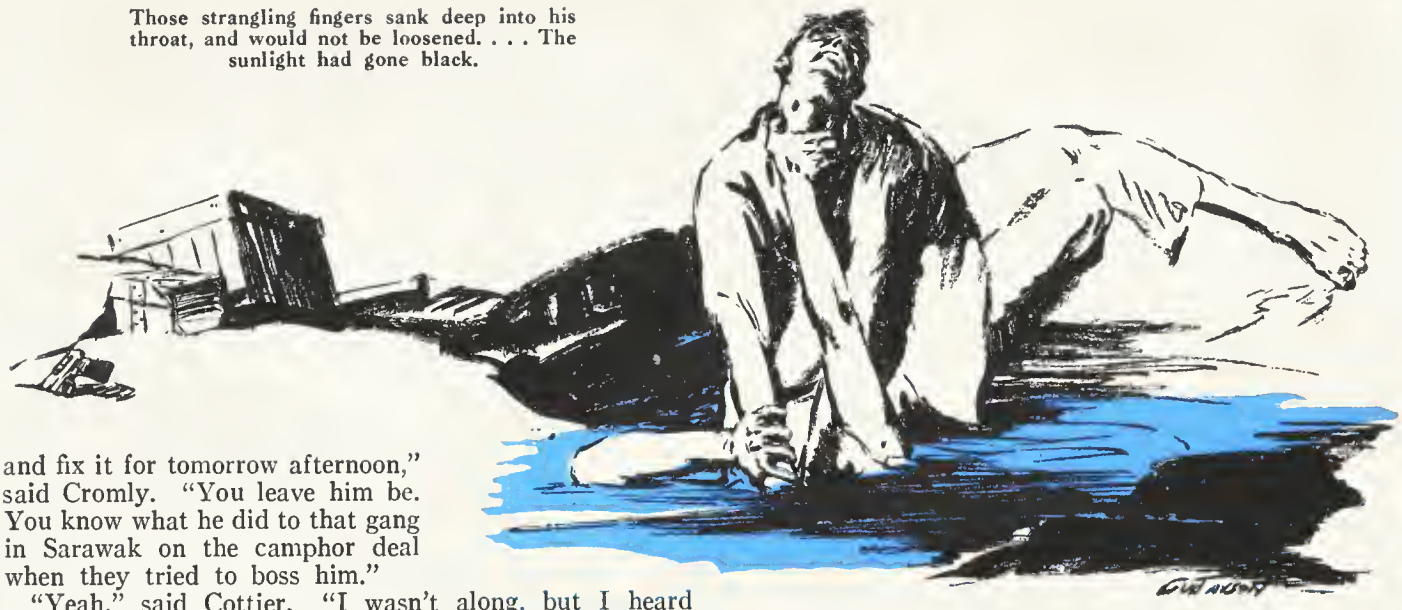
"Don't worry," said Cromly. The two were somewhere near by, but Burck could see nothing of them and dared not move lest they hear him. "With a hundred thousand dollars at stake, the Cap'n aint playing the fool. With this vinta, we can take the stuff into Zamboanga or go back to Manila or anywhere else, and have no trouble landing it."

"With him along?"

"Stow it. He won't be along. I s'pose you'd like the job of spiking him, huh?"

"Not alone," returned Cottier frankly. "He's a wildcat, that bird is! But he aint got a gun; I went through his bag last night. He'd ought to be easy fixed. Callahane will do it any time—he's been waitin' to settle with that guy."

"Well, if it'll make you happy, I'll speak to the Cap'n



Those strangling fingers sank deep into his throat, and would not be loosened. . . . The sunlight had gone black.

and fix it for tomorrow afternoon," said Cromly. "You leave him be. You know what he did to that gang in Sarawak on the camphor deal when they tried to boss him."

"Yeah," said Cottier. "I wasn't along, but I heard about it—he bumped off five of 'em, wasn't it? That was before I come along. He was running mud into Indo-China then, huh?"

"Him and old Cap'n Horne together," said Cromly. "Macao into Saigon—they had a great time while it lasted, and would have cleaned up big if a girl hadn't blowed the gaff. The French come down on the Cap'n hard, and he just did get clear. They grabbed most of his crowd, though. It don't pay to monkey with the French. And right now, when we had a whacking big deal on hand, old Horne had to go blooey and wreck everything! Horne was a drunken old fool anyhow, and I always said so."

The voices receded and were gone. Burck lay for a little while, and then rose and made his way back to camp, his arrival passing unobserved. Almost at once, he turned in for the night.

So Crayton and Horne had been partners, running opium, eh? That explained a good deal about Crayton, at least, and it gave Burck something to think about now. Had Horne cached a big lot of opium aboard the *Mindanao* at Canton? Working with confederates at Manila, he could of course clean up properly on such a job. A crooked ship's master can get away with anything, which is one reason that crooked ship's officers are rarely found.

"But Horne was undoubtedly a crooked old duffer," thought Burck. "And blind drunk half the time, too! Well, whatever this game is, it's worth a hundred thousand to somebody. And this sweet gang means to bump me off tomorrow, huh? Pleasant news. And no way out of it at all. There's no fight in those Moros. No getting away from it, that's sure—unless I use my brains, such as they are. Well, see about it tomorrow—"

And he was presently asleep, having firm confidence that a man acted best on the spur of the moment, when danger threatened.

With morning, a fair day and a calm sea, Carty provided an early breakfast, and by sunrise the *Sea Hawk* was moving through the water, all hands helping the Moros with the big sweeps. Burck would have had some difficulty in locating the exact position of the wreck, except that it was low tide and a bit of the after-portion was exposed. With this indication, they had no trouble in laying the vinta practically alongside the wreck.

The old *Mindanao* had hit the reef and broken asunder just abaft the bridge. In the clear, shallow water they could see the two broken steel pieces of what had been a ship, straight under their eyes, unrobbed, untouched by natives, as she had been driven on the ledge there. Every detail was clear and distinct, but there was no detail of anything human—that had gone its own way.

"Well,"—Burck came up to Crayton, as the latter stared overside,—"what part of her do you want to reach? I know about where the various cargo was stowed. How about No. 1 hold?"

Crayton arose. "No," he answered, a greedy flare in his eyes. He jerked his hand toward the bow portion beside them, lying on the starboard side, the bridge almost to the top of the water.

"In there. Where the cabins were—under the bridge, eh?"

Burck nodded. "Want to get at the cabins, do you? Which one?"

"Cap'n Horne's. He was bringing the best part of our goods there, for more careful handling. You don't know anything about it?"

The black eyes pierced, but Burck merely shrugged.

"Nope. I wasn't in his cabin all the trip. He was. It's the first to the right of the passage. He didn't like an outside cabin, for some reason."

"I know. Afraid he'd squeeze out the port in a drunken fit—he had moods," said Crayton. "Well, so much the better for us. Callahane! Want to go down now while the tide's at ebb?"

"Sure," sang out Callahane. "Hey, Cottier! Did you bring that house-wrecker?"

Shaggy Cottier produced a large steel jimmy with hooked end. Cromly and Carty were faking a fine, thin, strong line. Callahane bared his gangling body, and Burck noted with some surprise that the body seemed made from steel, and had a chest like a barrel. About his waist Callahane fastened the line, and with a grin took the steel bar. Crayton told him which of the cabins was the one in question, and with a mere nod of comprehension, Callahane went over the side and down, Cromly paying out the line as he went.

The vinta had meantime been moved over the superstructure of the wreck, lessening the diving distance, and made fast. Carty now spoke up.

"Want me to go down too, Cap'n?"

"Not now," said Crayton. "Let Jack work this morning, and you can take on the job this afternoon. With luck, we should get the thing cleaned up before dark. I'll want to get what we can done this morning—better visibility in the water with the sun behind us. Stow the gab; now, and watch out for signals on that line!"

All of them craned over the gunwale, eyes fastened upon the water and the depths below. Burck lit his pipe and relaxed, little interested in Callahane's work. What Cromly had just said, backed up the conversation he had overheard the previous evening. Callahane was to be landed with him on the islet, for obvious reasons and with obvious intent. And even if he took care of Callahane—what would that avail him?

"He's comin' up!" exclaimed Cottier, after what seemed an interminable wait. "And he's made the line fast."

"Give him a hand!" ordered Crayton.

Next moment Callahane appeared, gasping, and was hauled into the boat. He grinned as he lay there, recuperating, and then was helped to his feet, amid eager questions.

"Yep," he reported at length. "Door's fastened back—wasn't even jammed. I made fast the line and came back for another."

"Is the stuff there?" demanded Crayton.

"Couldn't tell. Gimme ten minutes' rest, and I'll take a look-see. Chests, aint it?"

"Should be," said Crayton. "Prob'ly half a dozen small ones, with handles. Make fast to the handles."

Callahane nodded, and made a gesture of caution, and Burck caught no more of their words.

Not that he cared. He already knew all that he needed, to guess what was going on. Horne had put aboard a big shipment of opium, and Crayton was now retrieving it, intending to run into some island port and land it, as might easily be done without suspicion. Half a dozen chests—a hundred thousand in gold! It was a big thing, sure enough!

"And without me, they might not have got it so easily," thought Burck, as he sucked at his pipe. "They might've located the wreck in time, sure; no wonder they were so anxious to have me along! Might have searched these reefs for a month before lighting on the spot. And we ran on to it in twenty minutes. Prob'ly they're pretty mad over having brought me along for what looks so simple. That'll make it all the worse for me."

Presently Callahane went down again, taking another length of line. The purpose of this was to make it fast to a chest, evidently, and those above could then haul in with a minimum of work on Callahane's part in getting the chest out of the cabin and passage.

"He's made fast!" went up the cry. "He's comin' up again—watch out for him!"

Callahane was hauled in anew, and presently had gulped breath back into his lungs.

"Everything's jake, Cap'n," he reported. "Pile o' chests layin' along the port wall—looks like they'd broke out of the lockers. Two lines down there now. I'll take another down and make one fast. Better be sure what we're doin' before we go ahead."

IT was not to be so simple as this, however. Twice more did Callahane go down before the first of the chests was got to the surface—it caught in the passage; it caught on the ship's rail below; and getting it up was not easy. Meantime Crayton lit a cheroot and joined Burck.

"You don't seem a whole lot interested, Mister," he observed.

Burck grinned lazily. "It isn't my funeral, is it? Getting up some of Horne's private baggage, are you?"

"Yes, sure. We're beginning with that, and we can come back with a couple of divers and go after what cargo we want, now that we've found the wreck O.K." Crayton was still making an attempt to allay any suspicions Burck might have, evidently. "Knew about his having those chests aboard, did you?"

"He did say something about it—I've been trying to remember just what it was," said Burck. "He and the chief officer had some sort of deal on, and I've been trying to recall it. I suppose it'll come back to me."

"The mate wasn't in on this, though?" asked Crayton. Burck merely shrugged. "Well, it don't matter. By the way, I'll leave you and a couple of the others ashore, when we start back this afternoon. We may need a bit of room aboard here, if we bring up any stuff."

"Suits me," said Burck carelessly. "I'd like a little time ashore—good and quiet there, and I could rest up."

"You'll have plenty of rest," said Crayton, and his chuckle belied the grim double meaning of his words.

Then Burck knew for certain. Two of them! Taking no chances with him, eh?

WITH noon, the first of the chests had been brought up—small, heavy chests of red teak, fast locked. The second was on the way, but was snagged somewhere, and Callahane was all in, too exhausted to do more at once. Crayton gave orders to return to the islet, his companions talking together in low voices and eying the chest eagerly. They meant to open it ashore.

There was no breeze. The water was glassy, unruffled, with only a long, steady swell breaking over the outer reefs; the sun beat down with white-hot resilience, leaping back from the water. When they landed, the coral was too hot for the naked foot. Carty set about getting a meal; the Moros remained aboard with their rice and fish and fruit. Burck went for a stroll with his pipe, kept his eyes open, determined gradually upon a course of action. The uneven little islet, humped with coral at the western end, could be seen from where the wreck lay, but the western end was higher than the rest and would hide most of its expanse from the sight of those aboard the boat. What went on here could not be seen by the others.

"All right, Mister! Come and get it!" sang out Crayton, and Burck casually rejoined the others for their noonday meal.

They were all very genial to him, Callahane especially, and he noted the fact grimly enough; it was further indication of what manner of men these were. He discovered, not without a secret delight, that Cromly was the other man who would remain ashore. He had not liked Cromly from the start—had divined an implacable quality in the man, a stern hypocrisy, marking him as dangerous in the extreme.

When their meal was finished, there was a general demand to open the chest, but Crayton refused, under plea of the heat; a look passed around, and the others assented without argument. Then all turned in for a brief siesta, and Burck wandered off alone to the hummocky end of the islet, where he settled down in a sandy nook above the water, and waited.

The hot sun wore on. Presently voices reached him—the vinta was setting forth for the afternoon's work, with Crayton, Cottier and Carty aboard. Callahane and Cromly remained ashore, apparently still asleep. Burck wondered how they meant to work it; but while he wondered, he quietly gathered a few jagged lumps of coral rock about his feet, and lit his pipe anew, unhurried.

He saw a possible way out now, if he could use his brains aright—and cursed softly because he had been so slow in thinking it up. An hour earlier, and everything might have been different.

Cromly appeared, alone, mopping sweat from his face and cursing the hot sun. His white jacket was limp and streaked with sweat; one pocket hung heavily, dragging at the cloth. Burck remained where he was, and waved his pipe at the other man.

"Exploring? Better wait till the tide's at ebb—quite a bit of reef exposed then. Might pick up some fish in the pools."

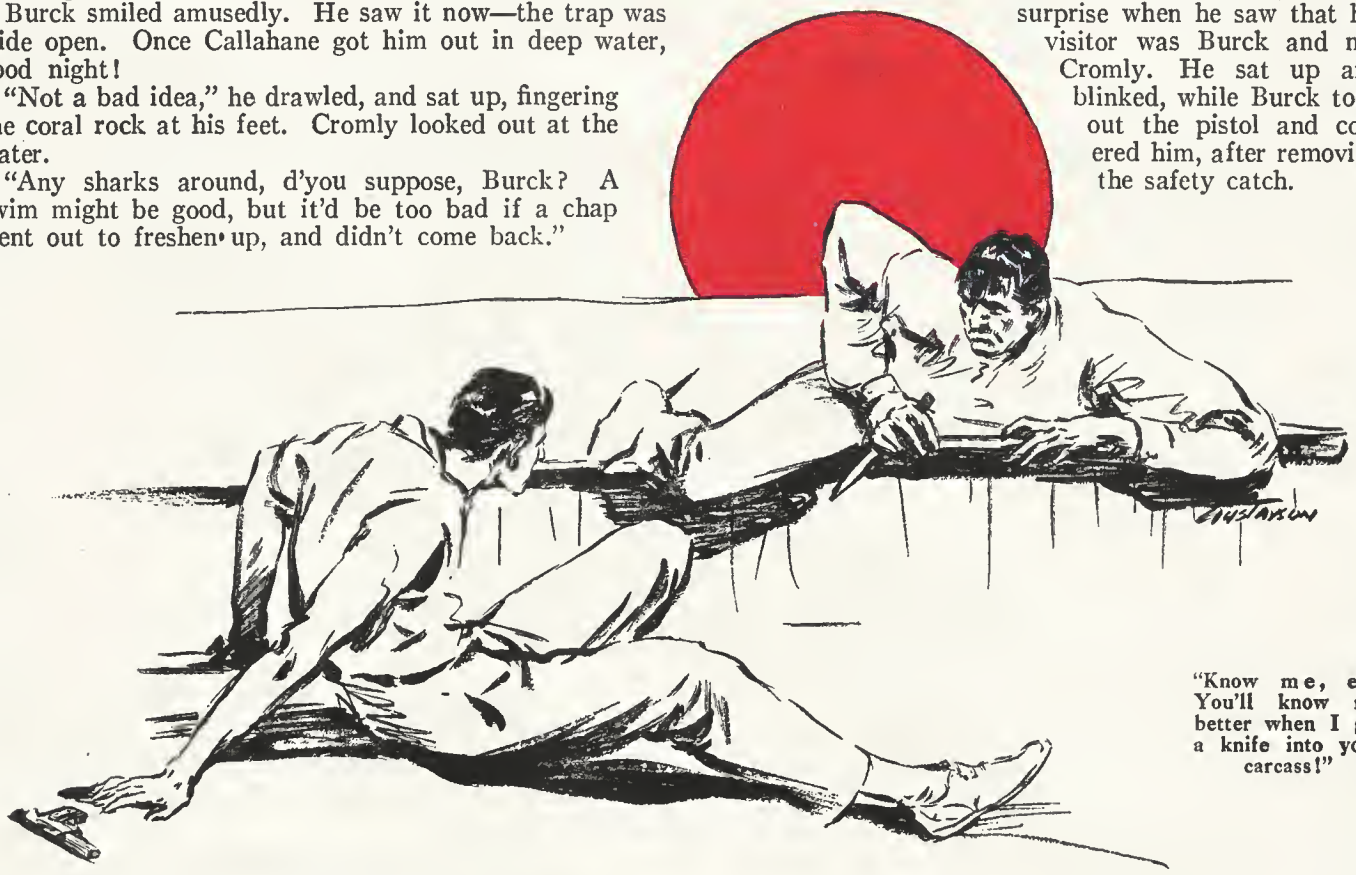
"Fish be damned!" said Cromly. "What say to a swim? It's hot as the devil. Might do us all good—freshen us up a bit."

Burck smiled amusedly. He saw it now—the trap was wide open. Once Callahane got him out in deep water, good night!

"Not a bad idea," he drawled, and sat up, fingering the coral rock at his feet. Cromly looked out at the water.

"Any sharks around, d'you suppose, Burck? A swim might be good, but it'd be too bad if a chap went out to freshen up, and didn't come back."

Callahane was taken by abrupt surprise when he saw that his visitor was Burck and not Cromly. He sat up and blinked, while Burck took out the pistol and covered him, after removing the safety catch.



"Know me, eh? You'll know me better when I get a knife into your carcass!"

"Aye," said Burck, and gripped one of the jagged fragments. "What's that gun in your pocket for? Why don't you use it, and quit trying to bluff?"

Cromly swung around on him abruptly, ludicrous astonishment in his face.

"What's that?"

"You heard me," said Burck. "Think I don't know your scheme? Guess again. I'm no fool. You try to use that gun, and you're done for, Cromly."

An oath, of mingled dismay and fury, broke from Cromly. Murder-fires leaped in his eyes, and he caught at the gun dragging in his pocket. Burck had been awaiting that look, that gesture; even with what he knew, he could not strike down an unsuspecting man. But this settled everything—Cromly as well.

The gun came clear, but too late. Burck had timed his own movements exactly. As it came clear, the jagged coral fragment, hurled like a bullet, caught Cromly between the eyes—a cruel and merciless blow, perfectly aimed. Without a sound, without a word, the man crumpled up and pitched over. The automatic fell from his relaxed fingers. He lay face down, head and shoulders in the water.

Even as he stooped above Cromly to pull him back, Burck realized from the position of the body that it was useless. There is something about lifeless clay that conveys its own dread message—something felt rather than seen. Either the blow had been heavier than Burck meant, or that bulging forehead had offered too little resistance.

Burck picked up the pistol, pocketed it, looked down at the dead Cromly. Then he turned and strode away across the coral, toward the camp where Callahane lay smoking easily with a mat propped up to give him shade. Burck had no regrets whatever in the matter. He had a seaman's hatred and contempt of dope-handlers, and regarded each of these men with no more sympathy than he would feel toward a reptile.

"Hey!" exclaimed Callahane. "What's all this? Where's Cromly?"

"Sit still," said Burck coldly. "Cromly went for a swim, and a shark got him. Same thing will happen to you if you get fresh, my man."

Callahane snarled at him, the lean, seamed features falling into ugly lines.

"Hey, you gone dippy or what?"

"Don't play the fool," said Burck with lashing contempt. The man was naked to the waist; his jacket lay beside him, and Burck reached out his foot and lifted it away. "Left your gun in your jacket, eh? That's bad luck for you. Sit still! Now, you talk."

Callahane glared up and mouthed a curse.

"You've been shipmates quite a while with Crayton, haven't you?" went on Burck calmly. "You know all about him and old Cap'n Fargo down Sandakan way, huh? And you know all about that business over at Sarawak, when he cleaned up on his own gang in that camphor affair. And you were with him at the pearl-beds. Lucky for you that you weren't with him at Saigon, when he skipped out and left all the rest of the gang to take their medicine!"

"That's a lie!" Callahane was visibly startled and shaken by this exposé of knowledge on Burck's part. "It wasn't him—it was that girl of Cap'n Horne's! And the Cap'n done his best for the gang—"

"And landed them safely in Noumea at hard labor," jeered Burck.

"Say, who in hell are you, anyhow?" demanded Callahane. "How come you know so much?"

"That's none of your business, you wharf-rat!" snapped

Burck. "You come across, or you'll go to join Cromly. Who takes the stuff off your hands in Manila? Blow the game, and you'll have a chance of keeping out of Bilibid Prison. Why d'you suppose I was aboard Horne's ship, you fool?"

Callahane gaped at him.

"So that's it! You're a lousy dick, huh?" he gasped.

"And there's a French consul at Manila right now, with extradition papers for you," said Burck. The random shot went home. A furious eruption of oaths came from Callahane. Utterly dismayed and disconcerted by thus being in the hands of his expected victim, the man was weakening. "Come on, talk up! It's your one chance."

Callahane licked his lips, glanced up furtively, a cunning gleam in his eye. The throbbing crashes of the surf along the outer reefs filled the air with subdued thunder, and occasionally the coral beneath them shook and shivered to the concussions. Burck perceived that the man was temporizing, searching for some loophole; like a cornered rat, he had gone to pieces, but would fight if he had the ghost of a chance to win.

"That all you want to know?" he demanded.

"That's enough to start with," said Burck. "How is it handled?"

"There's a feller in the Calle Rosario," replied Callahane sullenly, "name o' Juan Batista. He's got a drug-shop there. He takes it off of us—I dunno the price, but it's high. What he can't handle goes to the Hip Sung Mercantile Company, the Chink outfit back of the Viscaila Hotel. That's all that I know about it."

"That's plenty," said Burck. "What was Crayton's last ship, before he lost his ticket?"

"You'd ought to know," snarled the other.

"I'm asking you. Cough it up!"

Callahane picked up a packet of cigarettes from the sand and lighted one. The gleam in his eye told Burck that some purpose lay behind the action, but he made answer curtly, without evasion. "The *Harcourt Castle.*"

"What?"

Burck was astounded; and seeing what he had let slip, Callahane glared up viciously at him. The *Harcourt Castle!* That had been the sensation of four years or so past—a master convicted by Admiralty courts of gross negligence in his duty, of killing men and using unnecessary brutality, and stripped of his license. So this Hamilton Crayton was in reality the infamous Captain Morton of the *Harcourt Castle!*

"Blast your dirty eyes!" snarled Callahane. "You didn't know that, huh?"

He took his cigarette between thumb and finger to flip it carelessly away in the sunlight. Unwarned, Burck paid no heed—and the burning cigarette struck him blindingly in the eyes. With the same motion, it seemed, Callahan flung himself forward, gripped Burck's ankle, brought him to the sand, flew at his throat with vicious intensity.

The automatic was jerked into the sand half a dozen feet away. It exploded harmlessly, the shot sounding empty and thin upon the air, overborne by the muttering pound and thunder of the surf along the coral. . . .

Locked together in a death-grapple, the two men rolled over and over in the sand, fighting with unleashed, insensate madness.

Then happened the unexpected. With those steel fingers locked about his throat, Burck tried vainly to drive home a loosening blow, flung himself desperately across the sand. They rolled over, twisted about, went slap-dash into the water—and with a frantic effort, Burck found himself uppermost and kept himself there.

Those strangling, choking fingers sank deep into his throat and would not be loosened. Burck knew only that somehow he was keeping his own face above water, holding down the writhing, squirming thing beneath him with knees and hands. The sunlight had all gone black; he could see nothing, feel nothing, hear nothing save the roaring in his ears. His lungs fought spasmodically for air and could get none because of the throttling hands of steel that had clamped about his throat.

Then they were loosened, and air flooded in. There was a flurry in the water. Burck was thrown off, went scrambling back into the hot dry sunlight, stood clutching at his neck and gulping in air. Gradually his senses cleared, his sight returned. He sank down and looked for Callahane, and could see nothing of him.

After a moment something flashed. He saw it now—a figure floating face down, a dozen feet from shore, motionless, falling and rising a little with each wavelet, a mere splotch upon the glassy greenish sea.

Barely in time, too. With a rush and swirl, the shark was beneath them.

BURCK put his head in his hands, rubbed his neck presently, then went to the pile of stores and got some water.

It had been a near thing, he reflected. Even now he could hardly understand how it had all happened; he felt weak and sick and dizzy. That death-grip had all but settled him for good and all. Then he came to his

feet and staggered over to the water, remembering Callahane. Perhaps the man was not dead, had not drowned there beneath him. . . .

Halting abruptly, Burck was suddenly jerked back to himself by what he saw. The splotch upon the water had gone from sight. Instead he discerned a reddened, crimsoned pool in the green water, swiftly dissolving from sight; and across it cut two tiny triangular objects—the dorsal fins of two sharks at work there.

Burck turned away. Hardened as he was, the sharp horror of this left him unnerved. He had killed two men, each of them without the intention of doing so; criminals though they were, outlaws, dope-handlers, none the less they had been men. Had the others aboard the *Sea Hawk* heard that pistol-shot? No; she lay half a mile away, and the breeze that had come up would have carried the sound away from them, even had the surf-thunder not drowned it.

Throwing one pistol into the sea, Burck pocketed the other. He examined the chest of red teak; and with the tools that lay on a mat he smashed the lid, broke into it, found what he was looking for: tins of opium from the Macao factories. He covered up the chest again and settled down with his pipe, to wait.

"Hang it all!" he reflected. "I'm no policeman. This is none of my business, if they'd only been square-shooters. But now it's root, hog, or die! They've deliberately set out to murder me, so let them take the consequences."

THE afternoon dragged on slowly, the sun gradually sinking toward the western sea-rim. Watching from the hummock beneath which lay Cromly's body in the sand, Burck finally saw the vinta start back for the islet —slowly enough, by reason of the reefs now exposed by low water.

He went back to camp and made himself as good a meal as was possible, not knowing when he would eat again.

When the *Sea Hawk* swung into sight, he was seated on the shore, calmly smoking his pipe. He waved cordially to the three white men who stared at him, incredulous, and affected not to see their astonishment. The pile of chests amidships showed that Crayton's objective had been achieved.

As the big craft nosed in, Crayton sent a hail at the nearly recumbent Burck.

"Where's Cromly?"

Burck jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

"Went across the island. Said they were going for a swim."

Cottier's low-pitched voice, not meant for him, reached him none the less.

"He's a damned liar, Cap'n! You know—"

"Shut up," said Crayton, searching the little islet with quick eyes, as the vinta came in upon the white coral sand. "Hey, Mister! Callahane go for a swim too?"

"He went with Cromly," said Burck grimly. Crayton leaped ashore, and Burck slowly rose, with a lazy yawn. "Say, Crayton, I want to see you about something. I've remembered what it was the mate and Cap'n Horne had on hand. There were a lot more boxes like these came aboard, and it seems to me like they were in the mate's cabin."

The effect of these words was immediate—and had need to be.

Burck had hoped to produce his gun as the three came ashore, but this was a vain hope. He had already noted the position of Carty and Cottier, still at the gunwale of the vinta, and he was certain that they held pistols covering him. The absence of their two comrades had put all three men on the alert.

At Burck's speech, however, Crayton gave him a searching glance, then turned and nodded to the others, while the little brown dish-faced Moros watched the white men in puzzled wonder.

"Get the stuff stowed, lads," said Crayton, and gestured to the one case on the beach. "Better put this one aboard and get 'em all lashed. I'll go look up the others and be back pretty soon. —Now, Burck, what's all this about more cases? Come along, and talk as we go."

Burck knocked out his pipe and fell in beside the other. He saw that Crayton had banished suspicion, yet was fully on the alert.

"Well," he rejoined, as they strode off across the coral, "the looks of those boxes made me think of it finally. I remember, when they came aboard, the mate was having some sort of argument with Cap'n Horne, and Horne was trying to hush him up. Said something about a Cap'n Morton of the *Harcourt Castle*—that was all I caught of it. I remember, though, that most of the boxes were stowed in the chief officer's cabin."

Crayton came to a halt. That name struck him like a blow; his black eyes drove into Burck like steel probes. His hand was in his jacket pocket.

"Mister, is this on the level?" he asked in a low, hard voice.

"Eh?" Burck glanced at him in well-assumed surprise. "Why, sure! I was tellin' Cromly about it, and he said to tell you when you came back, that this might change all your plans. Of course it may not amount to anything."

Crayton was silent for a moment, and Burck could well read his thoughts. The notion of another dozen cases of opium was staggering, and the reference to Cromly might well explain why Burck was now alive instead of dead None the less, Crayton did not remove the hand from his pocket.

Then Burck played his last, desperate trump card. He glanced back at the beach, and his voice came softly.

"Crayton—you fool! Don't go any farther—they're waiting for you."

"What?" Crayton swung upon him. "What's this, now?"

"Quiet!" Burck cautioned him. "The others are in on it, too—back there. Cromly's up by that hummock of coral. I don't know where Callahane is, but he's not far. They let me in on it, and I pretended to agree."

CRAYTON'S heavy features drained of color for an instant, then flushed again.

"Are you tryin' to come some game on me?" he snapped harshly; yet there was fear in his eyes—a swift flash of alarm, almost of terror.

"Judge for yourself," said Burck. "They're scared you'll do to them what you did to some gang at Sarawak—you probably know the details; I don't. With you out of the way, they plan on turning over the mud to somebody named Batista, in the Calle Rosario—"

Crayton started, and his black eyes flamed savagely on Burck.

"They spilled it to you?"

"Of course," said Burck impatiently. "I'm supposed to be in on the game with 'em. They mean to do you in and split the loot, savvy? You haven't a chance in the world if you don't use your head. Neither have I. No time to fool around, now; you've got to act sharp and quick! Carty and Cottier will be along to hem us in. We've got to strike first. I'll go back and attend to them, while you gather in Cromly."

Crayton stared.

"My Lord! And I took you for a simple guy, Mister!"

he breathed. Swift decision tightened the lines of his face, and his eyes became deadly. "Scuttle me, would they? By grab, I'll fix 'em for this! Where's Cromly—up by that hummock, eh? All right, Mister. You and me together! I'll attend to Cromly, the damned dog! Get those other two ashore and watch out for 'em—they might run off with the craft. I'll fix Cromly—he's no good with a gun, anyhow!"

And with this, Crayton turned and strode off toward the western hummock.

Burck was momentarily astounded by the success of his ruse, but knew he had no time to waste. His problem was not only how to remain alive—but how to get away. If those Moros knew what was up, they would hoist sail and be gone in three minutes' time. That would suit Burck, but he wanted to be gone likewise, and it was no simple matter.

He hastened back toward camp, and saw in a flash that his one hope was vain. The prow of the vinta had been drawn up on the beach, and all hands were putting the stores and the first opium-chest aboard. As he approached, alone, Carty and Cottier came hastily to meet him.

Burck put his pipe in his pocket—and whipped out his gun.

"Up!" he commanded. "Up, you blasted wharf-rats—up!"

They half hesitated, then obeyed, snarling oaths. Burck walked in upon them, took a gun from each pocket, and tossed the weapons aboard the vinta; the Moros were gaping at the scene, open-mouthed. Burck gestured to them imperatively.

"Out!" he ordered. "Run her out!"

To his astounded dismay, the brown men completely misunderstood his words and gestures. They had seen him jerk out his gun; they probably thought he had gone amuck and meant to do for all of them.

With one accord they turned, plunged overboard from the gunwales of the long craft, and swam madly to right and left along the beach, anywhere to get out of his reach. Carty and Cottier, edging away, had darted off, shouting hoarsely to Crayton as they went.

Burck stood there alone, gun in hand, helpless. He was master of all he surveyed, it was true, but to get that vinta off the beach would need three or four men at least.

IN vain did Burck call to the Moros. The more he shouted and gestured, the more frantic became their efforts to escape him, as they thought. They drew themselves up on the beach to one side and the other, scurrying to get behind pistol-shot.

Burck darted to the prow of the vinta and set his weight against it desperately. Not an inch could he budge it—and the tide was going out every moment, leaving the craft more firmly beached!

Worse, he had unwittingly set the Moros against him; there was no refuge on the islet; the water held deadly peril; there was no other craft in which he could leave. All this flashed through his mind on the instant, as he watched the fleeing brown men, the running, stumbling, shouting white men.

Crayton stood motionless, his figure outlined against the sky at the hummock of the island, evidently having just discovered the truth about Cromly.

Burck turned abruptly, splashed to the prow of the vinta and hauled himself aboard. Seamanship came to the rescue, offered a possible solution. The huge sail had been carried ashore, the better to stow the chests and stores, but the vinta had not been drawn far up; only her bow was fast on the sand and coral.

Putting his pistol with the other two he had tossed aboard, Burck shed his jacket and went to work, with a gleam of hope beckoning him. The six chests of opium had been set amidships, and lashings were ready but not in place. The stores were disposed fore and aft of the chests. If he could get them all into the stern, before the tide had run too far out—and perhaps it would not go out much farther! It must already be fairly close to full ebb.

He worked like a madman, frantically heaving at the chests and stores, moving everything aft into the stern that he could reach. He dumped everything pell-mell into the stern, heaping stores and chests together; sunset was at hand, the glowing red disk touching the western horizon. When he had moved everything within reach, Burck caught up one of the long sweeps and thrust it over, well forward.

A shot cracked out. He saw Crayton, running toward the camp, shooting as he came. Burck laughed and leaned upon the sweep. Another shot and another—but the vinta moved! The long outriggers stirred and scraped along the coral; she pulled clear as the weighted stern lifted her to the push of the sweep.

AGAIN Burck leaned upon the long oar, setting it against the coral, putting all his strength into one mighty shove to send the craft well out. Midway of that shove he felt an abrupt shock, staggered and barely caught himself. A bullet had struck the sweep—it broke under him. He looked down and saw a growing red splotch upon his bare chest and side, a swift spurt of blood that astonished him, for there was no perceptible hurt. Alongside was a huge splash.

Then he saw something else, as the vinta reeled and rocked. Crayton, dropping his empty gun, running to the water's edge, came out in one great leap. Full twenty feet he covered in that frantic, desperate hurtle through the air, to plunge into the water almost alongside the vinta's prow. He went down, but next instant he emerged, pawing through the water, caught the gunwale of the craft, and pulled himself up and half across. Burck, not three feet away, saw the wild glare of the black eyes staring into his.

And behind, following their leader, came Carty and Cottier, throwing themselves into the water and swimming out with all speed. It was their moment, their chance, and they knew it, as they saw Burck standing there, empty-handed, blood spreading over his side, hard hit, unable for the instant to move or speak.

The vinta was slowly floating farther out, with the remaining impetus of that last shove. All these things had passed swiftly, in the short moment of time since the final shot.

Crayton edged himself inward, kicking himself up, sending the vinta a little farther from shore. He was half over the gunwale, ready to sprawl in, watching Burck narrowly. Burck shifted his weight to take a step, and darkness rushed over him for an instant. He got himself in hand, but felt weak and dizzy. He saw Crayton grin and get a fresh grip, and a puff of breeze struck the vinta and wafted her out farther.

Burck looked down at the three pistols, just behind him. His own helplessness dismayed him. All the strength seemed gone from his body. He felt his knees loosening, and to save himself from toppling over, sat down heavily, with a jar that shook the frail craft. He was facing Crayton, and his hand crept behind him, searching.

"You're a good liar!" panted Crayton, gathering his muscles for the pull over the gunwale. "By grab, I'll cut your heart out in another five minutes, you swine!"

"Thanks, Cap'n Morton," said Burck weakly; and the shot told. Crayton snarled an oath.

"Know me, eh? You'll know me better when I get a knife into your carcass—hey! Damn you, damn you—"

Crayton's voice rose shrilly as he saw the pistol jerk around and come up. He made a great effort, flung his body inboard, tried to scramble at Burck.

The pistol exploded, and Crayton lay quiet.

HARDLY conscious of his own act, Burck looked at the man, looked at the pistol in his hand. His brain was awake now; he could motivate his body and muscles, though feebly. Then he sat quiet—a swift spasm of horror came upon him.

"Cap'n!" It was the voice of Carty, from the water. "Give's a hand—look out there, Ed! Quick, Cap'n—for God's sake—"

The voice shrilled up in one fearful, shuddering scream. Seated there as he was, Burck could not see what was taking place, for the high gunwale hid the swimmers from sight—but he could guess. No sound came from Cottier. The shaggy little man was there too. . . .

Burck caught the gunwale, drew himself up, flung out a line that was close to hand. All useless! Carty was gone, amid a terrible red smear in the water. A knife flashed in the hand of Cottier—the man was fighting desperately, striving to drive in a blow under that sharp triangular fin. Burck seized the line and cast it to him, with a strangled cry, forgetting that Cottier was an enemy, forgetting everything except the horror in the water.

Cottier drove in his knife, caught the line, plunged sideways. Burck hauled in, finding unguessed strength in this emergency, and brought the shaggy head in close to the vinta. One of those darting triangular fins came sweeping down.

Cottier saw it, and a scream burst from him:

"Quick—gimme your hand!"

Burck reached over, felt a sharp stabbing pain, but came to his feet with a pull and a wrench that helped lift Cottier up and over the gunwale. Barely in time, too. With a rush and swirl, the shark was in beneath them, turned mouth up for the grab, but too late.

"Lord! That was a close one!" exclaimed Burck. "Lucky for you I—"

To his astonishment, Cottier came to his feet, brushed the hair out of his eyes, crouched with a vicious panted snarl, knife still in hand. Then, silent and venomous as any reptile, the man drove forward and sent the knife plunging in for the stomach.

BURCK parried that blow, but the weight behind it thrust his weakened body over, sent him full length backward, hands outflung. Cottier, following, swiped down with the knife, but in his mad fury to kill, missed his mark, sprawled over Burck's body, jerked savagely to free the blade that had gone deep into the planking. Burck's hand closed upon a bottle that had fallen from a case of bottled water, and almost blindly, he crashed up with it.

Struck across the head, Cottier relaxed and crumpled up.

"Pure luck, that was!" muttered Burck. He sat up shakily. He looked from the senseless man to the figure of Crayton, close beside; and as he looked, Crayton stirred a little.

Once more emergency spurred at Burck, battling against the temptation to give in, to go down and sleep and let the devil fly away with everything. His fingers touched his side, found torn flesh, but there was no pain. He wondered at this, sighed, and with a terrible effort heaved himself up and got the same line that he had flung Cottier.

With this he bound Crayton hand and foot, after seeing that the man's skull had merely been grazed by that bullet. He trussed Cottier likewise, then looked down at himself for the first time. The sun was gone under the horizon, but the afterglow gave light in plenty. Burck saw the blood over his flesh, over his trousers-leg, and explored the wound. Oddly enough, it began to hurt suddenly, and he winced as his fingers followed it. The bullet must have glanced from the long oar, for it had struck the ribs and torn a great gash in skin and flesh downward across his side and flank—and was gone. Beyond a bad flesh-wound, which would be painful enough, there seemed to be no damage.

Burck laughed weakly. "By gosh! And I thought I was done for!"

He lifted his head and looked at the islet, now about a hundred feet off, and saw the Moros standing lined up and down the shore, watching. Again weakness came upon him; again crisis struggled within him, fought desperately, won the battle. Burck moved to where the light anchor lay, as he had carried it aft with its line, and he got one of the shanks across the gunwale, then heaved it over, and saw the line pay out rapidly.

"Well," he muttered, "if—if I'm alive tomorrow—by glory, I'll win out yet!" And with this, he crumpled up and lay quiet, as the swift tropic night came down the sea.

THE morning sun blazed down from the eastern sky, flooding with pitiless hot light the vinta scurrying over the seas toward the Mindanao coastline. The weight of the opium-chests, lashed amidships, held down her speed appreciably.

The Moros no longer had any fear of Burck; he had attended to this capably. Now they brought him food, put fresh water on the bandages about his body, grinned at him with black betel-stained teeth showing. Burck grinned back from an unshaven countenance, and then his eyes hardened as he looked at Crayton and Cottier, who sat bound against the half-deck.

"Any more oaths, gentlemen," he said curtly, "and you'll go home wearing gags."

"What's your price?" demanded Crayton, his eyes lurid with hate.

"Haven't any," said Burck cheerfully.

Crayton glared at him.

"Nonsense. You needn't expect any reward for turning us in with the chests."

"Don't be silly."

"Damn you! What do you intend to do?"

"Gag you, since you can't cut out the oaths. Then turn you and your opium in to the police; and I hope you'll do the rest of your dope-running behind bars for the next few years. I have a hunch that you will, too."

Ten minutes later Burck relaxed and held a match to his pipe, while the two captives made inarticulate noises through their improvised gags. Burck regarded them amiably and then grinned at the Moro master, and the brown man grinned back at him delightedly. Moros love a brave man.

The vinta held on under the blazing rain of sunlight, toward home.

The fascinating story of an American's desperate adventure in Soviet Russia—that strange bleak bewildering land of the anti-God posters, the Five-Year Plan, the propaganda loud-speakers and fire-signs, the collectivist farms—and the sinister secret police known as the Gay-pay-oo.

By

S. ANDREW WOOD

Comrades Of Chaos

The Story So Far:

ELSA PETERSON stood at the cracked window of the little room in Apartment House 187, Karl Marx Street, and looked down at the pavement below. This had been the house of her father, the English scientist, and the beautiful Countess Nikolai, his wife. And now—it was like a cheese that teems with maggots, inhabited by a score of families billeted there, with only two tiny rooms left for Elsa and her brother Martin.

It was rather terrible to be only half-Russian in the Red Republic. Worse still, when the Russian half came from the hated aristocrat blood, even though Elsa and Martin were citizens of the Soviet—even though Comrade Elsa slaved in the dispensary of the Lenin Hospital.

Nitchevo! What did it matter? It had been a lovely house, and she had had a lovely mother and a fine father; but they were dead, and the Government had taken the house, turned it into a barracks, and filled it with five hundred people. It was now Apartment House 187.

Martin came in from his work, and they ate their scanty supper. "I wonder if John Worden ever thinks of us, now," observed Martin presently.

A little tinge of color surged over Elsa's thin cheeks.

"Why should he? He's safe in America, and he's rich and—happy, I expect; a bloated capitalist, Martin."

"Old John Worden a bloated capitalist!" Martin laughed softly and shook his head. "No fear. He's the old hell-for-leather John, for a certainty. You've got his photograph somewhere, haven't you, kid?"

"Yes." Elsa's newly awakened color deepened.

"Um. Better tear it up, for safety."

Somehow the name of John Worden lightened the dingy apartment. Yet tragedy lay in memory of him. John Worden had been their demi-god six years before. They were children in their 'teens, and he was a great, clean-limbed giant of twenty, with blue eyes that laughed at the lean years and the lean people about him. And then one snowy night, in the days of the Tcheka, the blow fell. The secret police came very swiftly and silently, as they always did. John Worden's father and mother were pistoled as they walked through the dark garden to the waiting prison-van.

While the suave explanations of an "accident" were being made, David Peterson and his Russian wife were sent to the Siberian timber-camps. They had both died on the way, peacefully, it was said, and in each other's arms.

Somehow, John Worden had got out of the very teeth of the Tcheka, escaped from Russia, reached England and then America—to become rich, in that dear, sane country which seemed to belong to another planet. And Elsa and Martin Peterson were left behind in the chaos. . . .

Another blow fell now. For now again the dreaded secret police appeared, asking questions about one John Worden. Martin was hauled off to the sinister Butyrka prison—where he was "questioned rather severely."

The police had indeed reason to ask questions about John Worden. For it was he himself, disguised as a workman, who spoke to Elsa next day. He had come back to Russia to rescue them—and to exact vengeance from Boris Vladimir, who was responsible for his father's death.

Worden was to have still greater cause for vengeance, it appeared; for Boris Vladimir told Elsa that he would secure Martin's release if she would come to him at his "house of the red door." And when Elsa saw how Martin had been tortured, she consented. Just in time John Wor-

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An old peasant woman on the outskirts of the crowd began to moan. Worden saw the glint of a torch on an Ogpu cap and red-gold hair. The flame-spurt and crack of a pistol came.

Illustrated by
Joseph Franké

den appeared, knocked out the Cossack, and drugged him. Then with Elsa, and the order for Martin's release, Worden went to the prison, brought away the badly injured Martin —and laid a plan for their escape out of Russia. *(The story continues in detail:)*

VLADIMIR awoke, swimming with nausea, brandy in his mouth, a bitter scent in his nostrils. Yogatai, his man, was bending over him and drenching him in some volatile liquid. In the dimness the monkey-face of Koregorvsky, secretary to the state prosecutor, loomed—compassionate, but yellow-toothed with triumph.

"They left the Butyrka in the early hours, Vladimir. The boy walked out under the order of release as calm as you like, by the sainted beard of Lenin! Your little wife,"—Koregorvsky wagged his head and opened his eyes,—"your little wife, his sister, and another young man were with him. Would you like to come down to the Butyrka to investigate this remarkable case?"

Vladimir sat up. With a giant effort he thrust away the clouds of sleep from his brain. One somber glance he flung at Koregorvsky, who paled uncomfortably. "Do you know who the other young man was?" Vladimir asked.

"A workman. Your—hum—the sister's sweetheart."

"It was the American, John Worden," said Vladimir, staring at Koregorvsky. "I laid a trap to bring him here where the girl was. Unfortunately he turned the tables. He's quick-witted. Have you your car? We'll go down to the Butyrka."

As he moved to the door, something cold laid itself to the heart of Comrade Boris Vladimir, People's Commissar. It was worse than icy rage. It was an Asiatic calm with

fire beneath it. Fear of John Worden, the cold dogged desire for the girl who had helped to trap and fool him, fear of the Council, if they should learn the truth, froze him and cowed Koregorvsky to silence as they sat in the car together. The young Commissar's head still throbbed with savage and mute laughter as much as with the drug that was still in his veins.

But it was gone when the gateway of the Butyrka grated open for them. Drishkin, the governor, came from his den. He glanced at Vladimir, and bowed stiffly, clicking his heels. His manner was sardonic. Drishkin, lord-elect of the Butyrka, and one of the most powerful men of the Three Letter Corps, feared no Commissar.

"The order of release was genuine, Comrade Vladimir. We shall get them all back, no doubt. A little fresh air for the boy prisoner; that's all. Madame Feodora has the case in hand. She is interrogating an old woman who was brought in. Will you join her?"

"She's here," said a musical voice. A pair of topaz eyes searched Vladimir's face with a spark of amusement in their depths, and Madame Feodora softly murmured, as she gently touched his fingers: "Poor Boris! Are you better? Come and look at the old woman."

Even in that noisome dungeonhole where humans became beasts, her blonde and radiant skin shone, and her hair was like a golden helmet. It was said that Feodora Federoff was a woman of the Don Cossacks, and had hunted men and bloodied herself before she was out of her teens. Legend said that for a time she had been a woman of the old Tcheka, one of those beautiful ones who lived and spied for the Internationale in the Countries of Reaction. Once she had been a woman Commissar in the Caucasus, in the days of the Famine, and taken her morning walk with her pistol among the corridors of her prison. . . . And good and gentle men had loved her and had been destroyed. The Terror was not dead, it was said, in Moscow, while the Bright Angel lived. They built great factories and giant wireless stations; and in the Kremlin they dreamed of the time when the Brotherhood of Man should stretch from Asia to the Western World. But out of Russia's dark past the Gay-pay-oo had taken the Bright Angel and made her useful. . . .

"She is an obstinate old woman," said Feodora thoughtfully. "I don't think she's much use."

It was Madame Lydia, the old ballet-dancer, who sat on the stones of the interrogation-cell, her gray hair hanging, and the soiled brightness of her torn dancing-skirt about her. Her voice came in a kind of mechanical croak.

"He was my nephew from Nijni-novgorod, and a sweet boy. He loved her, and so he took her back to Nijni. They are both good citizens. He is a member of his factory *komosol*, and that is all I know about them."

"Hopeless," said Feodora Federoff. Again her glance danced at Vladimir with something approaching mockery. "She was strung up for a little while, but I had her cut down. I think she's dying now."

"They were young," muttered Madame Lydia. "Why should they tell their business to an old crow like me? Go to Nijni. You will find them there. If there is an ikon in Russia that has not been befouled, I will swear on it. Not a beheaded one, Madame Bright Angel. No beheaded ikons for me. He was my nephew from Nijni-novgorod—a sweet boy." Her voice ceased.

"I think she's dead," said Feodora. "Did you love that girl so much, Boris? What would you give me if I brought her back to you?"

"Gratitude, Feodora." Vladimir smiled stiffly into the golden eyes. There was a time when he had smiled into them before—but not stiffly. "If you can include this John Worden in the bargain—"

"I think I've met John Worden once, in the south of France—Antibes. We clashed a little. I should be glad

"Comrades from Moscow? This is an honor indeed."

"We seek sanctuary," said Worden slowly.

to meet him again. The prospect thrills me. The impudent giant!"

"Then catch him!" said Vladimir with a white face. He was sneering. "It would be presumptuous to interfere with the Gay-pay-oo, but I would suggest that instead of trying to pump an old woman, you threw a net over Moscow and lie in wait at the railway station for them, on their way to the frontier."

"Excellent!" said Feodora, the iris of her eyes wide with admiration. "The intellect of the Kremlin is behind that, Boris. One gets into the official habit so; *dossiers*, accusations, depositions and the rest. I'll set a watch at the station immediately. . . . The old woman *is* dead. She was a gallant old fool."

The gates of the Butyrka closed behind Boris Vladimir a few minutes later. Feodora Federoff watched him go, with her hand resting lightly on her hip. Then she took down her hat and revolver-lanyard from where it hung on the wall of the governor's office. Drishkin watched her in silence, like some old bear in a nightmare nursery, who would presently hold his sides and laugh.

"The airplane will be ready?"

"In an hour. At the Sovietsky Airdrome. I have just had the telephone message." Drishkin hid his smile beneath his heavy mustache. "Minsk, you said, madame?"

Feodora nodded. The light from the window caught the ripe and moist color of her lips.

"It is nice to meet old friends and give them a surprise, Comrade Drishkin."

"I believe so." Drishkin pulled his mustache. "My old friends have abandoned me since I took over the Butyrka. A ridiculous prejudice."

His laughter began to rumble, and work its way up to his gorillalike chest, ribboned with Soviet orders, and to shake the little epaulets on his big shoulders.

THERE was rather a crowd in the No. 3 Office for Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorce. It was a small, bare room, furnished in polished pine, with a long desk behind which sat three presiding geniuses: the clerk for Births and Deaths, the clerk for Marriages and the clerk for Divorce. A young man with a cigarette behind his ear, and a girl who had the features of a Murillo virgin, were getting divorced. She smiled at Elsa shyly, and held up a kicking baby.

"Little Luksha is not interested," she said. "He does not belong to this one. I am marrying his father again. This one is bone-idle. He will find himself in the timber-camps, I tell him, if he doesn't look out."

There was a weeping peasant-woman registering the death of her baby. She carried the little white coffin-lid under her arm, for the funeral was that afternoon in one of the great cemeteries of Moscow. A melancholy old man was divorced by his fat and placid wife; a fierce, white-faced young communist was married to a thin red-haired girl whose hair stood out like a fan; and then the blasé divorce-clerk looked up from his ledger.

"Divorce," said John Worden arrogantly, "for these two. And then the woman will be free to marry me, comrade. The poor devil has met with an accident. Not that she didn't love me before that, you understand."

"Names," demanded the clerk, after pausing to look at his nails and fill his fountain-pen.

Elsa supplied them. She was Katerina Ogdanova, wife of Martinovitch Georgiov, mechanic, Fabkom 17, T.U.Y. factory. The divorce was because they were tired, and Martinovitch was not a good communist like herself and Mitka. As Elsa answered the clerk's languid questions, with the straight figure of John Worden in his leather jacket standing by her side, she felt that she was taking part in some fantastic play. In spite of the fact that she had steeled herself for that masquerade which was to help them evade capture and perhaps death, her cheek flamed.

"Eight rubles," said the clerk. "The marriage counter is along there, comrade." He grinned at Martin, who had quietly and dazedly put his cross to the divorce-papers with his bandaged hand. "Not for you, little husband-that-was. You go away, like a free man."

Worden made a grand and careless gesture.

"He comes back with us, comrade. Home to Minsk. There are no *bourjoi* sentiments about any of us, and he is sick. The damned switchboard in his factory nearly electrocuted him, hard worker and patriot that he is. We cannot desert him."

SUDDENLY, as he stood before the pug-faced clerk behind the marriage counter, the arrogance that Worden carried as part of his disguise, forsook him. He felt himself a lunatic posturing and performing in a great madhouse. John Worden had no illusions about Old Russia. Czarism had been bloody tyranny and untold misery for centuries, he believed. The fear many European politicians felt for this new terrible soul which a tormented Russia was finding, the humbug and hypocrisy that came in the trail of that fear, left him contemptuous. But this was insanity at the heart of insanity, like the communist girl Nadeshka. . . .

He looked sidewise at the curve of Elsa's cheek and felt a quick surge of his pulse. Once outside Russia, that marriage, which was so like buying a loaf of bread, would be food for laughter. Even in Russia, eight rubles—fifteen shillings or so—would dissolve it. . . .

It was over.

"I hope not to see you here again yet awhile, comrade," said the clerk, holding out a damp and pudgy hand over the counter.

"Let's get out," said Worden, and felt his voice strangely husky. . . .

The wind which swept along the snow-piled streets was like the breath of the Arctic; but it was not that which whipped the color into Elsa's face beneath the thick, pert powder she had put on. Though the gait of the emancipated woman swung her along, her eyes shone with a half-sacred light as they met John Worden's. It was masquerade, she told herself. For a number of hours in the train to Minsk they would be Mitka Ivanovitch and his new wife, with her useless ex-husband, and people would nod and smile at them, and commiserate with Martin. Certainly Russian! . . . And then, afterward, would come the frontier, Poland, freedom; and she and John Worden, if he kept his iron resolution to remain in Russia, would shake hands in farewell, and laugh. Her eyes filled with tears before she knew it. That was at the unsteadying thought of freedom, Elsa told herself.

"Martin, dear!"

"It was rather fun, Elsa. I'm right as rain, old thing. Don't worry."

He stumbled for an instant, near the gates of the station, and leaned against the wall, deathly pale. But inside the station he began to laugh, and Worden had to grip him. In a moment the contortion of his features passed. The train was at the platform, the ticket-office open. There was not a Three Letter man in sight.

AN hour later they were bumping through the snow-covered suburbs. The carriage was a crowded *myakhky*—third-class—already beginning to warm up and smell. But as yet nobody broke the social ice, save a bearded "kulak," a rich peasant anxious to ingratiate himself with the company. He leaned over, tapped Elsa's knee,

and pointed through the window, where a slender airplane, outlined against the gray sky, overhauled the train.

"Little wife,"—he chuckled at his own perception and cunning,—"how would you like to honeymoon in one of those, eh? I read in the *Pravda* that Davidov, the prima donna of the Moscow Opera who married a rich American, spent her honeymoon thus. What women do, nowadays!

"So," said the kulak presently, beaming at Martin,—after unwrapping a red handkerchief on his knee and revealing a mess of pale pastry and chopped sausage,—"You are the little husband-that-was, and you travel with the bride and bridegroom to Minsk? It is very amiable!"

At the words a large bald man in gray astrakhan emitted a growl. "Nowadays, while Russia is passing through the fire," he said, "one has to be amiable or die. We are too poor to be choosers—all save the rich kulaks who batten on the peasants, and are justly being exterminated."

The kulak cringed nervously. He was village money-lender, usurer and capitalist. Even though Stalin was herding the peasant as well as the worker into his vast slave-machine, the kulak still throve, in places. In the bearded man's village the peasants had recently tied three of his brethren to the sails of a windmill and watched them whirl round till they were only bundles of bones and rags. Which was why the kulak had been taking a holiday in Moscow.

"Come, come, no quarreling!" chided a good-humored woman's voice. "We are all friends in this compartment. Aren't we a wedding-party, after all?"

THE crowded carriage was agog with interest as the train jogged into the gray and snowy wilderness, and the towers of the Kremlin glittered like blown bubbles against a patch of red sky behind, before they sank out of sight. There were fifteen long hours at least, before Minsk was reached, for this was not the luxury *wagon-lit* which carried the rich foreigners who came to help the Five-year Plan, with their money and brains. Already the sheets were being untied, tea was in process of being made, and strong-smelling foodstuffs produced.

"Drink, little one," said the kulak, handing a bottle of vodka to Martin. "It will soothe your burned hands and perhaps something that is a little sore in your soul as well. Who knows? She is very pretty. I would not like to lose her, even to my best friend."

Elsa saw the dazed look creep into Martin's eyes again, as he shook his head. When they went like that, they lost all their color, as though he were dead. A thought came that was like a dreadful footstep behind her. Perhaps he would not recover! No word of what he had passed through in the Butyrka came from him, and never would. . . . Perhaps in Minsk it would be possible to see a doctor. Elsa prayed that it might be.

In spite of her self-control the carriage changed into a den of beasts for a moment, though it was full of kindly people who nodded at her like delighted children, and drank her health from horn cups and tin mugs. There was a Chinese girl-communist in the corner with eyes like black slivers of jet in her olive-yellow face, and a body that stooped as though at some time she had been tortured like Martin. Perhaps she had been helping to introduce the brotherhood of man in Pekin or Canton, and when the armies of Chang caught her, had gone through unnamable things which only an Oriental woman could stand, and keep alive. It was strange to sit in the same carriage with her, traveling to dear, dear home. . .

"There's no place like Minsk," John Worden said in his new arrogant communist voice. "We shall spring at the throat of Poland from Minsk, when the Soviet Union sweeps west to greet the Revolution in Germany and England. My *fabkom* debates the how and when, often. But we forget that at the moment—eh, comrade?"

He squeezed Elsa's arm with a smile and munched herring-slice and black bread with great content, while inwardly thinking of Sasha Voronov's house in Minsk. There was no time to waste there. The two must get over the frontier with their forged passports without delay, for Martin's sake. Martin was getting worse. It might be tetanus. Worden was afraid it was. . . .

Bumpety-bump went the train over the drab white marshes. A young man with fingernails like black claws played on a flute, and the Chinese girl unexpectedly began to croon a revolutionary song. Vodka circulated rapidly among the perspiring and happy throng. Presently the kulak was weeping tears into his beard because Martin reminded him of some dim domestic tragedy in his own life. The early dark closed in upon an uproarious box of humanity hotter than blood-heat and redolent of loving-kindness and many other things. Long before that Martin had climbed to his sleeping-shelf, where he lay like a wax figure. Wrapped in the leopard-skin coat of Nadeshka the communist, Elsa also turned in; but Worden sat among the grinning and surprised company, blessing the gift of a teaklike head and an ostrich's stomach.

"He stays up with us, the kind-hearted one," said a woman, yawning. "He considers the feelings of the little husband-that-was. If all the communists were as tender as you, comrade, we old ones would not wonder so much what it was all about." . . . .

Smolensk, and seething waiting-rooms; a family encamped under a burlap tent on the platform; the kulak and the young man with the flute staggering blindly from the train, arm in arm; factories, with their lighted windows gleaming like a myriad gold teeth; loud-speakers barking news and propaganda; a man walking slowly between two Ogpu officers, his face a death-mask. . . . Worden, peering through the frost-incrusted windows, saw it as a kind of phantasmagoria under the violet arc-lights before the train rolled out on its way into the darkness again. The large bald man spat with relief at the exit of the kulak, and linked his arm in Worden's like a blood-comrade. It seemed that he owned three droshkys in Minsk. He admitted it with a guffaw of laughter, and wagged his head in delight.

"You will see. The three citizens there, and I." He indicated three of the most vodka-besotted individuals in the compartment. They grinned sleepily back. "We shall see that you have a marriage-procession home. No walking for a gallant bride and bridegroom like you. We will convey you. It is settled."

"I am a communist, comrade." Worden was uncomfortably startled. "Our ideology laughs at that sort of thing. I thank you, but—"

"Ideology, my hand!" chuckled the droshky-owner, who was now very drunk indeed. "I know nothing about it. I know you are not a tomcat who has walked out on to the roof to find the first she who meows. You love her, little Mitka, and she you, by the saints! It shines from her.. This is a marriage. It is settled. No more."

PRESENTLY the droshky-owner and his companions went to sleep, for the remaining hours to Minsk. Worden stared at their jogging heads with a feeling of consternation and an inward curse at his own gifts of good-fellowship. Then a thought came. Old Sasha Voronov expected him in any guise and at any time. Nothing would make that placid, red-bearded old man betray anything. It would be splendid cover from any Three Letter men who might be watching, to drive up to that little house in Minsk as a marriage-party.

"Kismet—otherwise, *nitchevo!*" Worden murmured the password of Russia which even the Soviet had not obliterated, rolled his fur blanket about him, and slept. . . .

The *provodnick*, the train-guard, cherrywood pipe in mouth, awakened the carriage with his surly bark. It was half an hour for Minsk. Whoever wished water from the hot-tap for their little kettles and samovars must hurry. The price was ten kopecks. No change given. No loose money, no hot water, not even for Comrade Stalin himself. . .

"Soon now!" whispered Worden, squeezing Elsa's hand. "Whatever happens, keep smiling a little longer. Old Voronov will see us safe."

More vodka. The droshky-owner pulled up his walrus mustache for tea. This was a wedding-party, and here was Minsk. Take care of the little husband-that-was; he looked very sick. . . . A black, cold morning, with the smell of a tannery by the station, two waiting droshkys with horses like bony dromedaries that slept in the shafts.

"Inside!" yelled the droshky-owner. "Inside, friends all! To the bridal-house with Comrade Mitka and his little bride and her husband-that-was. Number 10, Third Internationale, you Yenovitch, son of a blistered goat. And remember that you drive a wedding-party!" he adjured, as he followed them into the droshky.

A black figure leaped into the path. Worden drove for it; a fender sent the man into the snow.

An accordion, which had hitherto been silent, preserved for that auspicious moment, struck up, as the bells of the droshky tinkled. The dark streets of Minsk were full of wind that impinged like sharp crystals, but it blew from the west, from Poland and freedom, and Elsa lifted her face to it. One of the party broke over her hands a small flask of scented ointment, saved up perhaps from some looted church of the Revolution; and somehow it made her answering smile quiver. It was Russia, where, in the same breath of time as reckoned by destiny, Ivan the Terrible had reigned and the Soviet made four million gramophone records of propaganda speeches in Chinese, Hindustani and Turkish, to bring about the dawn of freedom in the East.

"The love-abode!" roared the droshky-owner, now no more than a smile of benevolent drunkenness hid in a terrific bush of mustache. "Here it is. We will see you inside, but we shall not intrude, never fear, Mitka mine. But tell me, what is to be done with the little husband-that-was, in the name of God?"

"He comes inside," answered Worden.

An odd thrill passed through him as he knocked at the closed door, and the reverberations went down the deserted street with a hollow sound. There was silence, save for a squawk from the accordion as it slipped from the player's hands; then a shuffling footstep. A light gleamed. The door was opened slightly. A woman with a kerchief round her head peered out.

"Enter!" she said in a swift whisper.

The droshky-owner kissed Worden on both cheeks and thrust him inside.

The three found themselves in a dark lobby, and Elsa felt herself tense and trembling, with her arm about Martin. In the street the accordion had started a quivering tune.

"Voronov?" asked Worden. For some reason his mouth was beginning to dry.

Lights sprang suddenly. The face of the droshky-owner, where he clung to the area-railing in the street and waved farewell, suddenly went blank and mottled. The accordion coughed as though in terror, and stopped. Turning slowly, Worden saw that the lighted lobby was crowded with black and shining uniforms. The cold rim of a pistol pressed against the back of his neck.

"In the name of the Government!" a voice said. "March!"

Worden's first emotion was one of shock and sickness, a sense that he had been guilty of treachery and bitter failure—to walk, on the shoulders of a jolly Russian wedding-party, as it were, into such a trap. For trap it was, he knew in a flash, a trap carefully laid and steel-sprung.

"March, Comrade Karl Marx of the Leather Jacket!" It was evidently an Ogpu officer with a certain sense of humor. "Before I blow all your theories to atoms! Up the stairs! You are awaited there."

It was quite useless to resist. Worden, with the cold circle of iron at his neck, looked across at Elsa and Mar-

tin, who stood between two other officers. There must have been in his look something of the pitiless self-blame he felt, for very slowly, very glimmeringly, Elsa's white face smiled back at him.

The last thing Worden saw, as he looked into the snowy street, was the droshky, its driver standing and lashing the dromedary-like horse furiously, with no other thought but to leave as far behind as possible that Ogpu-stricken house.

It was a gaunt house of dark staircases, with threadbare carpets, and here and there little ikons gleaming against the greasy paneled walls, but also, here and there, a red-draped portrait of Lenin. Even in the bitter tumult of the moment, as he went upstairs with the Ogpu officer's pistol nosing gently against him, Worden could not help but think that that was like poor Sasha Voronov, old Sasha Facing-Both-Ways, as Worden's father had called the old St. Petersburg Jew. He was taking no chances with either God or the Kremlin. What had these Three Letter hawks, who saw everything, done to him? John Worden guessed that he would soon know.

"March! Before I blow your theories to atoms! Up the stairs! You are awaited."

The door of a room on the second landing was open. They entered, and the officer searched Worden deftly for weapons, but found nothing; for Worden had left his pistol behind in Moscow, deeming it wiser.

"Leave him," said a voice.

It was a big room, with flowered wallpaper and green plush furnishings—with, in the corner, a dirty silver casket Worden had known from childhood. It contained, he had always understood, the ashes of Sasha Voronov's wife, who had died years before, but it was green with verdigris. A woman sat on the couch, wreathed in the smoke of a cigarette. At his entrance, she rose and said in English:

"How do you do, Mr. Worden?"

A laugh left her at his thunderstruck expression. But she waited for him to speak.

"So *you* are the Bright Angel!" he said slowly.

She made a little mouth. It might have been faint disgust.

"They call me that. Just as they call you Mitka Ivanovitch. You look a very fierce communist in that disguise."

"And you, Countess Feodora, look very dangerous in that Gay-pay-oo uniform." Worden smiled grimly, in spite of the situation.

"I was always dangerous. You told me so in Antibes."

Worden's blue eyes rested on the golden-skinned face. He remembered her vividly—had thought of her now and then. When he had last seen her she was Countess Feodora, a refugee, an aristocrat of the aristocrats, proudly selling her jewelry for an existence in the sunny pleasure-places of southern France. The word *bolshevik* had made her shudder, then. He had pitied her greatly, and they had become firm friends. Perhaps the Countess Feodora and John Worden, the leisured and wealthy American, would have swiftly become something more, if she had not disappeared, leaving a tear-stained note to say that she had been called away, but that perhaps some day her destiny would be good to her and they would meet again. . . . And here she was in Russia, like a bright blade taken out of its velvet scabbard.

"You're not too startled? I told you we should meet again. It was stupid of you to think that Voronov could carry on his get-away agency indefinitely. He's been under surveillance for months. You've no idea how many people have plunged into prison instead of freedom when they came here, poor idiots! Do you want to know how we managed this? We let you take that boy Martin out of the Butyrka because we knew you would try to get him and his sister away, *via* Voronov. Naturally, I've known you were John Worden almost since you came to Russia. I chartered an airplane to get comfortably here before you."

"Very clever," said Worden from tight lips. "And what have you done with Voronov?"

"I left him to the local officers. I'm only concerned with my own Moscow diocese, at the moment. I think they tied him to the beams in the next room while they questioned him. You mustn't be shocked. This is Russia. We're going to be the greatest nation in the world. And the Tcheka and the Ogpu only stepped into the shoes of the Terrorist police of Nicholas." She paused. "Why didn't you shoot Boris Vladimir?"

"I was persuaded otherwise," answered Worden with a stiff smile.

"That girl?" Feodora toyed with her tan revolver-lanyard. She was bareheaded, and the clipped head looked like crisp honey. In some way she was lovelier than the gentle little Countess at Antibes, who had been all yellow curls and soft milk-white skin. "I hope you don't take seriously this jolly marriage-party which brought you here. I'm afraid she is ear-marked for Boris if she stays in Russia. He is quite Asiatic, at heart."

"If she stays?" demanded Worden.

For answer, Feodora rose to her feet. She stood for an instant, close to Worden, with a faint, enigmatic smile. The door was closed, and they were alone, though there was probably a guard outside it, the man guessed. Feodora pulled aside the curtain of a window. She rubbed away the steam moisture. It was still very dark, and the lamps of Minsk glimmered like stars below. Over the

black distance beyond the town a serpent of light wound its way slowly, growing smaller and smaller.

"The Paris train. It will be in Berlin tomorrow. They wouldn't have caught it, of course, your two precious children. But if you wish, they shall catch the next one, with passports and visas complete."

"What do you mean?" Worden caught the Bright Angel by the wrist. A faint wash of color came to her throat, but her eyes danced mischievously.

"This is so sudden. Rather like that moonlight night on the beach. Do you remember? But to be serious: they shall have passports and go—on one condition."

"What is that?"

Something like golden lightning flickered over the woman, as bright, as dangerous, as exciting.

"You stay." She watched a furrow of grim amusement come about Worden's mouth—and she drew near his giant frame. "Not as the unwilling guest of the Gay-pay-oo, Monsieur Laughing John, as I used to call you. As one of its agents. Russia needs men like you. Menjinsky, our head, needs you. If you like—*I* need you. You came to Russia for adventure. Here it is."

IN spite of himself, Worden's heart jumped. He felt confused and thrilled to the marrow with mingled hope and loathing. He had walked, with his charges, right into the wolf's mouth; and now, when everything seemed quite hopeless, the vulpine jaws opened for them to walk out again. He said, with a touch of iron incongruous in the circumstances:

"I came to Russia for a certain People's Commissar, Madam Bright Angel."

"He is still in Moscow," answered the woman. "And all of us in the Gay-pay-oo, however disguised, are permitted to carry weapons, and use them when necessary."

Suddenly an almost hypnotic change seemed to come across Feodora. She sought Worden as a Jesuit sought a convert. Her eyes became like plaques without depth or color.

"Once, you talked to me about the soul of Russia. I laughed to myself. I couldn't tell it to you then, while I was pretending to be a little refugee. I can show it you, now. I'm a woman-officer of the Ogpu. I'm a revolutionary instrument. I was turned into that at the Lenin Institute, where I studied three years. They might have sent me to Thibet or Afghanistan—where, if I had been caught, I should have been mutilated for a week or two by black and yellow men, before I died. Instead, they sent me to the Riviera, where I met you. Then, because I was a Cossack girl and knew how to hunt men, they made me a woman-officer of the Ogpu."

She paused. She laughed softly with the fanatic light about her which John Worden had seen in so many faces during the past two months.

"We cheat and lie and betray each other, and it's all in the cause of humanity. When we have the world in our hands, we shall stop it, and be kind to each other. . . . Russian, isn't it, Laughing John, like that comic droshky-man who brought you here? But I believe it. And so do millions of others. You must come in. Menjinsky gave me permission to bring you in. Your first task will be to your liking. It will be to watch Comrade Boris Vladimir, People's Commissar, who in private thinks of himself as a reincarnation of Ivan the Terrible. Oh, he does! We Russians are all a tiny bit mad, as you told me once; and his madness has boiled over a little, though he thinks nobody suspects it. You will be my lieutenant."

Her white hands fell to the lapel of Worden's leather communist's coat. There could be no mistaking the expression in her eyes. Once, in the moonlight that shone in the arbutus-scented grounds of the Hotel Mediterranée, at Antibes, they had glowed with the same opalescence.

"Give me a minute," said John Worden.

He touched his upper lip and found it moist. Yet his brain worked in some pitiless function of its own. Everything was quite clear. There were the labyrinths of the Butyrka for himself and Elsa and Martin, with some day, as they went to exercise, a revolver-arm stealing from behind the stone pillars. Or there was freedom and escape for them, and work for him in the Gay-pay-oo, with the little Countess Feodora, who had turned into the Bright Angel of Death. Mitka Ivanovitch, agent of the Gay-pay-oo, working to send Comrade Vladimir, of the Kremlin, to destruction. It was Russian enough. It suited him in many ways.

"You don't quite understand what I offer, I think," murmured Feodora.

He could feel the breath of her, scented like a woman, but with the leather tang of her uniform.

"I don't. In a way, I daren't. It's too startling, and rather unbelievable, Feodora—"

"I'll make you believe it. You were a skeptic before, when I hoped you wouldn't be. That's over." Her mouth was open, smiling. But the rest of her flared.

It was just then that, looking over the thin silver chain of her shoulder-strap, Worden saw that somebody had entered the room. It was Elsa Peterson, and she stood looking at him with a quiet horror, a misery and contempt, that for the instant struck him like a blow. . . .

Martin Peterson was in another room. He sat on the floor, crouched against the wall, his eyes on a level with the muddy top-boots of the two Ogpu officers who were guarding him.

The Gay-pay-oo again! The three terrible letters had branded and eaten into his soul. As for his flesh, waves of pain ran over him at intervals, and turned everything black. But, in the lulls between, he could think quite clearly. The Gay-pay-oo meant the Butyrka once more. The Butyrka and the Bright Angel!

He listened, his head hanging. The two Gay-pay-oo officers were talking. They thought he was unconscious, or at least too ill to move. They were Minsk men—not from Moscow. It appeared that in that room they had hung up old Sasha Voronov by his arms, because he was obstinate about revealing the details of his get-away agency. By looking up stealthily from beneath his eyebrows, Martin could see the two leather straps which still remained on a low beam from which the unhappy man had dangled his feet just clear of the floor. One of the officers kicked an ikon that lay near, making as he did so, some blasphemous comparison between Christ and Voronov. They were bored and yawning. One came over and stirred Martin gently with his foot.

"Senseless! She will be a long time yet, with the American, and the street is guarded. The café will be open now. Time for a quick one, Dmitri."

THEY vanished furtively, closing the door. Martin stirred; the fever that coursed in his veins gave him visions, and made him feel very cunning. If he could find where they had put Elsa, and in some way get her out, it would not matter about himself and John Worden. Elsa—in the Butyrka! Martin pressed his hands against his face. Then he began to crawl to the door.

It opened. The landing was dim and black-paneled, and nobody was there. By some means old Sasha Voronov had kept his house, big as it was, from being overrun by the proletarian herd. But as Martin sidled along the wall, there sounded the faint tinkle of a bell, and a big black

cat came from the stair-head to rub itself nervously against him. Its fur was wet with melting snow, so that it must have just come in from the street. That meant the door was ajar. Better reconnoiter.

Martin crept down the staircase, step by step. Even if the Gay-pay-oo found him there and put a bullet in his spinal-cord, it was better than the Butyrka and the Bright Angel, anyway. Martin paused a moment, giddy with terrible visions of the Bright Angel. Then he found himself by a heavy door, peering out into the street. The Gay-pay-oo had gone, but there was now a large automobile standing at the curb, and Martin Peterson's burning eyes grew brighter as he looked at it. Elsa could drive any make of car. Once get her at the wheel of that big black Gay-pay-oo hound, and there would be a chance. Of course, if he, little Martinovitch, could manage to kill the Bright Angel and get them all away, so much the better. The black waves of pain were coming over him again, sweeping in long rollers over his body and saying, *"Gay-pay-oo! Gay-pay-oo!"*

They went away. He felt tremendously, fiercely strong and clear-witted after they had gone. His poor hands didn't hurt him. He could have strangled the Bright Angel with them, easily. The black cat had kept close by him all the time, purring amiably as though it knew that he, Martinovitch, at any rate, was not Gay-pay-oo. On the landing, when he reached it, his fingers touched a big silver ikon that lay on the carpet, knocked down, no doubt, by the anti-God Gay-pay-oo. It weighed pounds, and was as easy to wield as a mallet.

Suddenly he saw a splinter of light from beneath a doorway, and the glint of the keyhole. He pulled the cat away, because it began to scratch for admission. Peering through the keyhole, he could see the whole room.

There was an old woman there—the woman who had admitted them; and she seemed to sit like an old idiot, dazed by grief. Her face, puffed and swollen with crying, showed within the kerchief that wrapped her head. She had no eyes, but only red lids which were closed in a complete stupefaction of tears. There was no one else there; but on a chair lay Elsa's hat. If the old woman had been Elsa's custodian, she had eluded her.

AFTER that, time became nothing for Martin Peterson. He was aware of himself creeping about the Voronov house, the ikon gripped in his hand like a crusader's mace—a figure for a Gay-pay-oo bullet, indeed. . . . And then suddenly he heard voices, and saw a half-open doorway. Worden, Elsa, the Bright Angel!

It was Elsa speaking.

"Voronov's old woman went to sleep. They left me with her, but forgot to notice that she was too half-witted to become an Ogpu agent all at once, madam. I recognize that there's no chance of escape from the house. I only came to ask if you will send a doctor to my brother."

"Immediately," said the Bright Angel. "He's very ill, isn't he?"

Her voice was gentle, husky, friendly. She stood near the doorway where Martin swayed in the dimness of the landing, with the slim back of her tunic to him—and she, that Bright Angel, that Dark Devil of the Butyrka, smiled at Elsa. Ill! And she had watched them switch his hands with the red-hot wires, and made him babble something of what he knew about John Worden, made him hope that Elsa would be friends with Borisky Vladimirovitch!

Martin struck. . . .

"Keep off!" he said in a low whisper. "It's my job. Only mine! There's a car outside, and the door's open. The road's clear, I think. You can make a dash for it. He's my job, I tell you. Gosh, what lovely hair she has!"

Something cracked in his brain, but it did not matter. It gave him such strength that he could bend down, pick up the Bright Angel—taking care not to fall over the cat which still prowled about his feet—and throw her over his shoulder. Good luck, though! Black cat— He elbowed John Worden aside as he tried to stop him, and ran, carrying his burden to the room where the leather slings which had held old Voronov still hung on the low beam. Her wrists were nearly too slender, but he tightened the straps for them and made sure that her small booted feet were just clear of the floor. It would not be for long. The Gay-pay-oo would soon take her down. But it would just give her a taste.

"Martin! Dear Martin!"

Elsa, pale as a sheet, was pulling at his shoulders, shaking him.

"Out!" said Martin. "I tell you there's a car. We can make it. We can make it, Worden, can't we?"

THE first feeling in John Worden, after Martin appeared and struck down Feodora with the heavy ikon, was one of despair.

The little Countess Feodora, who was now the Bright Angel of the Gay-pay-oo, had seemed eager to bargain for the safety of Elsa and her brother. They were in her hands, and she alone had the power to put them over the frontier. Yet even at that moment, Worden could not but remember the silent horror of Elsa as she had come upon him and the Ogpu woman officer.

It was all over far too quickly for him to prevent it. Martin took a kind of maniacal control. He turned from the limp and unconscious figure that hung from the beam, and thrust them to the stair-head. Even as they stood there for a moment, Worden felt Elsa catch him lightly, heard her quick question.

"Did you want to stay with her, John?"

"I was making a deal for your freedom and Martin's."

Elsa shuddered. "I wouldn't take it on her terms—whatever they were. You don't make a deal with the Bright Angel, and expect it to be honored."

"Perhaps not. Anyway, the map has changed—"

The whole house was still very quiet. It struck Worden that, in accord with her plan, Feodora had probably sent most of the local Ogpu officers away after they were safely trapped—with Voronov, perhaps. Martin's plan, desperate as it was, might carry a slender chance of success, and it was the only one left. The lights of the waiting car were visible in the street. Martin, with breath that hissed a little, shepherded them down the staircase.

"Steady, boy!"

Worden's wits snapped into place again. He crept out into the snowy glimmer of the street and saw that there was indeed nobody in the car. A hundred yards away, the illuminated red sign of a small underground café shone. By it, a man in sheepskin and glazed hat stood drinking from a steaming bowl. The chauffeur, no doubt.

"Get inside, quietly but quickly," Worden directed.

Worden himself sprang to the driver's seat. The starter whirred like the clang of metal—unavailingly for a few sick seconds. Then the engine roared and spluttered, and with a jerk, the big automobile started.

The red-lit café lay ahead, and under the fiercely opened throttle the car skidded on the slippery street, in spite of the heavy chains about its tires. A yell from the chauffeur, the crash of his bowl on the pavement, and the red spurt of a pistol all seemed to come simultaneously. There was one instant when the near wheels were deep in a swept pile of snow, and spun helplessly. A bullet came through the open window, starring the wind-screen by Worden's head. Others ricocheted angrily from the metal body.

"Bit of a gantlet to run," muttered Worden.

If Sasha Voronov's house had only been lightly held by the Ogpu, it was different with the street which contained it. A black figure leaped into the path as the wheels bit. Worden drove for it, and a fender sent the man down into the snow. At the corner ahead, another knelt, taking steady aim from the shoulder. The bullet set the glass tinkling about Elsa and Martin where they crouched low in the rear seat. But the car swung the street-corner safely and was drumming down some long tree-planted thoroughfare where, dark and bitter as it was, the queues were already gathered outside the state-rationing shops, and barely turned to look at the black Ogpu car which hurtled past.

For the first time Worden began to think that they might get clear. He knew that, compared with the network which the Gay-pay-oo had thrown over Russia to catch traitors to the brotherhood of man, the old Terrorist police were mere blundering wolves. Radio and the telephone, the airplane and, above all, fear, were at its service. But if it was possible to leave Minsk behind and gain the wide country beyond, there might be a chance to shake off pursuit and then abandon the car. The Polish frontier for a hundred miles round Minsk was closed to them now, even had they found Sasha Voronov's forged passports. Russia had Elsa and Martin again. . . . A hard muscle stood out on Worden's jaw.

Creeping about the house, the ikon gripped in his hand like a crusader's mace, Martin suddenly heard voices.

"Are you angry?" It was Elsa's voice behind him. He answered, keeping his eyes on the long, empty road ahead.

"Angry? No. But I wanted to get you out, Elsa dear. That particular door's slammed now. —I'm not blaming you, Martin." There was no answer from the boy. "But there aren't many doors out of Russia. She promised to get you out if—"

"If you would join her and the Ogpu!" Elsa's voice was low. "If you would let her use you! And then, when she was finished, and the Ogpu was finished with you too, they would have killed you. They'd have taken care that you did not escape, John, you may be sure. I'm glad we're here."

Something in her voice gave Worden a lightening of the heart. It seemed to him that in some way Elsa had cooled the flame of his vengeance against Boris Vladimir, and he was the better for it. He would strike all the more steadily, when the time came.

"You're marvelously brave. You know we're in rather horrible peril? They'll shoot us on sight if they get a chance. I don't think Feodora will make me the offer a second time, when she thinks of herself strung up like poor old Voronov. We shall have to keep away from Moscow and sink ourselves as somebody else again. Among the peasants, this time. Lucky I've got money."

"Lucky Martin and I have got you." Worden just caught the words. They shook him strangely. . . .

Minsk was left behind. A few glowing factories and a flaring ironworks on the outskirts dropped away. The glittering stars showed that they were running almost due south, rocking over a main road that was rutted and broken like every other main road in Russia, just then. For though the great Stalin could press a nation into servitude till blood and sinew broke under it, though he could create new Detroits and new prairies and turn dreamers and serfs into mechanics and agriculturists, under threat of the timber-camps and the pistol-muzzle, his transport had broken down.

In a way, that was in their favor. It left the Russia of the peasant villages still remote and apart from the cities. It gave three fugitives who were already growing adept at disguise a chance to lose their identities at the first opportunity. When daylight came, they would have to abandon that black Ogpu car as speedily as possible. But until then they must move on through the frozen darkness. The petrol-tank was nearly full. Worden saw that much from the gauge on the switchboard. Four hours until daylight—

Behind, Elsa sat trembling a little, her arms about Martin. He laid his head against her shoulder, and in the blink of light from the dashboard she saw his grin—his snub-nosed, homely grin, all pale and weary.

"First woman I've ever hit, Elsa. Does old Worden think she meant to get us out? He doesn't know her yet. She's got the holy flame, just like those guys in the Spanish Inquisition had, and she'd die for it, just like them. It's funny when something goes *phut* in your head, and you act in a way that you know is mad but dead right at the same time. . . . You're old John's Russian wife, now, aren't you?"

"No. It was all pretense—disguise."

"Legal, all the same—till one of you coughs up a few rubles to the Soviet and tells it you're tired. Guess neither of *you* will grow tired in a hurry. When you get home, it'll be that little church with the old tower, won't it? I hope so. I guess—I guess I'll turn up there, somehow."

Elsa felt cold fingers trail over her heart, and the darkness through which they traveled turned very cruel and cold. She laid her hand on his dry and burning forehead, whispering:

"Stick it, little Martinovitch! We'll find a village soon where there's a doctor and—and a hospital, perhaps."

Martin smiled.

"Little dead-weight Martinovitch!" he said. "Don't worry, kid. I'm happy. Most of the pain's stopped now. Kind of numb. But—I squealed a bit, in the Butyrka,

Elsa. Couldn't help it. The spirit was willing to keep mum, but the flesh was weak. You see, they—did a lot of things. If I knew you and old Worden understood, and forgave me—it'd help."

He snuggled contentedly against her shoulder at the little sound she made. Somewhere above the drum of the engines there came the distant howl of wolves, hunting in the pine-forests of the province of White Russia they were traversing. Now and then the glare of a fire, burning by some peasant's hut, glanced past. Little slatternly villages, steeped in darkness save for an occasional light, appeared and disappeared. Once they were deep in snow-drifts that were piled beneath a sign-post from which the direction-boards had long since been taken and replaced by a grim and weather-beaten wooden bust of Lenin. A wolf slunk over the snow, out of the quivering ray of the headlights, as they backed.

Elsa sat with her arms tight-locked about Martin.

"THIS is the place," said Worden. He stood by the Ogpu car, with the dawn in his lined blue eyes.

The rising sun was reddening the frosted tops of the pine-trees, and a cold blue light spread slowly over the snow-covered marshes. It shivered among the pine-trunks and crept from the east, heralding the short mockery of day that would only last for a few hours, glinting upon the steely surface of a large lake by the crazy road.

There was a village near by, for the ice of the lake was broken, and a large water-barrel lay on the bank.

"That's our destination," said Worden, pointing. "The Serguei monastery, judging from the map. A hundred miles south of Minsk."

Through the tree-branches a cluster of domes and spires jagged the horizon with that unexpected explosion of Oriental color against virgin snow which makes Russia like no other country, east or west. A few black crows soared about its gilded spires. There was no other sign of life on the great waste of marsh. For a brief while, in the lonely dawn, the old Russia where the priest cried his matins and the moujik bared his head at the wooden plow, seemed to have come back to the giant laboratory of life which was the modern Soviet States.

Worden put the big black car into gear, and started the engine. It slid slowly on to the hard blue ice, and then dropped through the thin skin which had frozen over the broken water-hole. Slowly it vanished, leaving only a few bubbles, bursting as they came to the surface.

"Can you walk, old man?"

FOR reply, Martin smiled and patted Worden's shoulder. His eyes were sleepy but very bright, as he turned for a moment to look long at the sunrise which was now in the full of its crimson glory. Worden, after one swift glance, put his arm about the boy, and they began to walk toward the gay and barbaric building that shone through the trees. Long ago, John Worden knew, the Soviet had hounded the monks from their monasteries, pistoling many, sending others to exile, but leaving a few with medical knowledge to minister to the peasants. At the Serguei monastery there might be some monk-physician, some rough hospital.

Worden's heavy boots beat off a lean dog that flew at them as they entered a rusty iron gate. At the sound of their footsteps there came the shooting of bolts; then in the great arched doorway of the monastery a figure attired in a tattered russet gown appeared. The sight of Worden's communist's leather jacket and spurred boots, brought a fierce gleam into the sunken, semi-starved eyes that vanished immediately. Yet there was a note of irony behind the monk's greeting.

"Comrades from Moscow? This is an honor indeed, brother."

"We seek sanctuary," said Worden slowly.

A dusky pallor crept over the monk's bearded, impassive face.

"There is no sanctuary now, comrade. There is no God. It is well known. There is only the state, and the Brotherhood of Man."

Gently, Worden caught the monk by the shoulders and thrust him into a little room, kicking the door behind him. It was a tiny cell with a plank bed over which hung an ikon. His blue eyes pierced the half-trembling, half-defiant ecclesiastic.

"There *is* sanctuary, brother, and there is a God! There is hell, and there is the Butyrka prison in Moscow—and the boy with us comes from the latter place. He is very sick; and in the name of God, in spite of my leather jacket and my swagger, I ask you to attend to him if you have any medicine."

"The Gay-pay-oo?" whispered the monk.

"They are after us, but we have shaken them off," replied Worden calmly. "No harm can come to you. I do not know your name, brother."

"My name is—was—Brother Gregori." The monk threw back his fine old head with weary pride. "I am now a laborer in the fields, but I know something of medicine, which is why I am left alive. The monastery is now a children's refuge. I ask nothing of your history, comrade. Whether you are fugitive or Ogpu agent, I will attend to your sick man."

IN all their lives, afterwards, both John Worden and Elsa Peterson, man and wife under the laws of the Soviet, remembered the Serguei monastery which had been turned into a communist school. For at the Serguei monastery, Martin passed the frontier and became free of the Butyrka for ever.

He lay on the little bed of Brother Gregori, very white, very quiet, though now and then his eyes strayed to the little ikon above him.

"Never had much religion, Elsa, had I? Didn't like the palaver and stuff the priests used before they were kicked out. They had some funny old Rasputins among them. Bit like some of the Soviet posters. But this damned anti-God crusade set me thinking. Pure cussedness, I suppose. . . . I'm all right, Elsa. Right as rain, but tired."

He smiled, and though his red hair was wet, he did not seem in any pain.

"Where's old Worden? Seems to be growing dark, a bit. He'll look after you, Elsa. Mr. and Mrs. Mitka Ivanovitch, eh? That was a joke. Not many jokes left in unholy Russia now—only chance ones. I squealed a bit, Elsa—but it hurt so. I've stuck it fairly well, since, though, haven't I? I knew I was earmarked when we walked out of the Butyrka. Guess I must go now. I don't want to lose that train. Passport and visa all O.K. Over the frontier with the best of luck. Might be a bit of a rough crossing, but when I see those white cliffs, I'll laugh. I'm laughing now, because I can see them, plain, quite plain, I tell you, old things."

On the old blue-lined cloak which Gregori the monk had spread for him, Martin's head sank back, his fingers still twined around Elsa's. For long Elsa sat without freeing her imprisoned hand, and without moving. It seemed to her, then, that she had known all the time, ever since Martin had walked so calmly out of the living tomb of the Butyrka, that he could not live.

"He bled inwardly, my daughter," Gregori the monk told her gently, "and he was poisoned by his burns. But

he laughed away pain, and died without any, a brave man. One does not grieve for such, even when they're as young as he was."

It was John Worden who released Elsa's fingers and gently laid Martin's hand by his side. He ran his hand softly through the crisp auburn hair of the boy, then glanced through the dirty window of Brother Gregori's little chamber. A great wonder swept through him at this strange country he had come back to. Brother Gregori stood with his beard on his chest, muttering some litany of the old Greek church, while in the monastery courtyard outside a neat little procession of boys and girls moved across to the communist school, there to learn that God was only a super-Capitalist, religion was a drug, and the Soviet the Light of the World. . . . The sound of their chanting lessons came:

"We are citizens of the World Revolution.
Comrade Karl Marx was our prophet.
The State and the Proletariet is all that matters."

It was like the "Twice one are two" drone of some homely village school. . .

"Elsa!" said Worden, aware of a great tenderness that almost unmanned him. He looked into the brown, grief-stricken eyes.

"There's hardly anything to say, my dear. Only, he wanted us to—carry on."

"Yes, he wanted that," answered Elsa very quietly.

She rose and stood near John Worden. There had been three fugitives, three of them knocking at the closed gates of Russia, courting death as they did so. Now there were only two. It filled John Worden with a great desire to take the slim body by his side into his arms, and cherish it for the rest of his life, whether that was destined to be short or long.

He left Elsa for a little while by Martin's side. Not for one moment dared he lose his alertness or go off the *qui vive*. He and Elsa were gypsies of peril, until they could hide themselves more thoroughly. Trustworthy as Gregori the monk was, he was helpless; for the grinning children of the communist school held him in contempt, made faces at the dirty window of the little room and jeered at him as the "God-factory." They were *Bez Prizorny*, the savage little Ishmaelites who, in time of famine, roamed the streets of the towns, plundering, killing, dying like little wild animals. The Soviet had rounded them up, and sent them to be little communists. But there were twelve-year-old murderers among them; and Brother Gregori believed, fatalistically, that some day some of the bolder ones would loot his miserable cell and put him to the knife. Krakorin, the young man who was head of the communist school under the local Soviet, had told him with a grin that it was bound to happen.

"If you are runaways, my son," said Gregori, "this is no place for you. Long ago it might have been. Yet"—the old monk sighed—"the brotherhood would have given you up to the police of Nicholas. In the old days the priests remembered their Czar too much, and their God too little. So God toppled, with the Czar. Evil only answers evil. Leave the boy with me. I will give him Christian burial."

WORDEN walked out under the green, white and red domes and mosaic walls of the Serguei monastery in hope that in the village near by it might be possible to hire a horse-sleigh to carry them across the steppe to some more distant province. But as he approached the gate, a sharp hail reached him.

"Comrade!"

It was a thin, spindle-shanked young man, in a leather jacket and top-boots like his own. He stood staring at Worden out of a beak-nosed, parchment-colored face.

"Strange company, comrade, that old God-merchant. Why didn't you come to the school, if you're of the Party?"

Worden, hand on big hip, looked down into the prying, ratlike eyes and sloping forehead.

"I'm not a young street-wolf, to be tamed in your school, comrade. I wanted medical aid, and the old God-merchant could give it. Unhappily it was of no avail. It was my brother who died. Shall I squat in the snow, and recite my business to you, chapter and verse?"

DELIBERATELY, Worden made his manner menacing and arrogant—with his inner wits razor-keen and swift. Though death and grief happened, the danger went on relentlessly. This was Krakorin, of the communist school. There were many communists, men and girls, who engaged in such work with the white fire of enthusiasm, who were even kind and gentle, according to their lights. But Krakorin with his hatchet-face, generously marked with blotches and boils, his loose mouth and shifty eyes, was not one of them. He was a jackal, and little else, as his sudden change to a cringing manner showed.

"Are you of the Lenin Institute, comrade?"

"Of more than the Lenin Institute, little Citizen Krakorin," answered Worden with an ugly laugh. "We do not all shout our secrets in Russia, eh? Tell me, where can I hire a horse and sleigh to carry my woman-comrade and myself away on our business from here?"

"I have both," said Krakorin eagerly. "They belong to the school. But tell me, comrade,"—his unpleasant face became crafty and fawning,—"was your business here connected with the old God-merchant? He is a great nuisance. He impedes progress with the young citizens."

Across Worden a memory of the old monk's words a few minutes before came. He looked into the ferretlike eyes of Comrade Krakorin, and answered with a deep-lunged laugh.

"Am I a village pump that you should work my handle like that, eh? What if Gregori were left to you, little Krakorin?"

Krakorin grimaced. He was vastly impressed by this sinister, good-natured comrade who hid power up his sleeve. Krakorin had addled his small brains with books from the local Polit-bureau, since the Lenin Institute had sent him to the Serguei monastery as unsuitable for other work. But at heart he was little more than a stupid and cruel peasant-boy.

"There is a little *Bez Prizorny* in my flock who could let the Holy Ghost out of the patriarch himself, with a slash in the stomach. It is a very neat rip he makes, comrade. A boy of thirteen. He kept life in his body in a sewer in Leningrad for a whole year. He does not like Gregori, because he tried to save his soul. He has learned that that is a mortal insult. Well—" Krakorin wriggled his lean, spindly body. "I only want permission from the higher authorities. In fact, I thought that in Moscow they would think more of me if I took things into my own hands. I am tired of the old man. He impedes progress."

"So?" suggested Worden softly. He carelessly took an object from his pocket. It was something he had found in the big Ogpu car that morning before sending it into the frozen lake—a little badge with three silver letters intertwined with a hammer-and-sickle. At the sight of it the pupils of Krakorin's eyes contracted as though before a bright light.

"It was a joke," he faltered. "They were so long in sending me permission from Moscow to wipe out the monk

Gregori—he is a second Rasputin, I assure you, comrade, save that he takes no interest in women and really believes in God—that I used the typewriter at the Politbureau, then signed the document myself. It provides for the sudden death of the monk. If the G.P.U. have any objection to the joke—"

Blue-lipped with apprehension, the wretch sent an appealing glance at Worden, and was rewarded with a slap on the back that sent him reeling.

"That was my business here, little Krakorin! By Lenin's beard, you're shrewd! Hand over that precious document, and I will give you a genuine one in exchange. But first, that sleigh. My woman-comrade and I—she too is of you-know-what powerful body—must reach Vlanstak before nightfall. . . . In the name of the Government, Comrade Krakorin."

Worden drew a deep breath as he saw the pear-skulled young intellectual who was breeding citizens for the Soviet out of stunted little pariahs of the streets, run hurriedly toward the stables. It was Russia—that strange mingling of animal cunning and simplicity which would not change even though the Soviet should enter the Air Age or the Radium Age in front of the rest of the world.

He walked back to the little cell of Gregori the monk, and found Elsa waiting for him with calm, dry eyes.

"There's a little graveyard," she said. "They haven't touched it. Even the communists are a little frightened of ghosts. Brother Gregori says it is an orchard of pink apple-blossoms when the snows go away."

"We can leave him there," said Worden, pulling off his cap for a moment. "And now, Elsa, we carry on."

"I'm ready."

Worden and she said good-by to Brother Gregori, and went out into the courtyard. Krakorin's sleigh already stood by the gateway, with a sleek chestnut horse between the shafts. In the big room which the monks had used as a refectory the lessons were in full progress, amid a plaster of lurid propaganda posters. Through the window a clump of little cropped heads was clearly visible, and at the blackboard a thin communist girl in horn-rimmed glasses scrawled figures which conclusively showed that, by 1933, there must be a dictatorship of the proletariat in London and New York.

Krakorin ducked with anxious friendliness to Elsa.

"It is twenty-five versts to Vlanstak, comrades," he said, "but the horse is a good one."

ELSA and Worden sat beneath the sheepskin rugs while the runners began to snore over the hard snow, and the colored domes and cupolas of the Serguei monastery fell behind. To Elsa at least, they were like the spires of a dream that sank into the past, bearing Martin with them, sleeping and happy. Perhaps John Worden, in spite of the shadow of tragedy, was thinking of other things. He found himself looking at the stubble of Krakorin's brachycephalic skull grimly. There was one thing sure: The school of budding Karl Marxes at Serguei must never again see Comrade Krakorin, who had forged himself an order to wipe out Brother Gregori, by means of the most advanced of his pupils. Worden pondered a sudden blow upon that pear-shaped head from behind, or alternatively, a strong compression of the gristly throat. The thought brought a hard line that might have been the wraith of a smile to his mouth. Elsa had persuaded him against killing Boris Vladimir in cold blood. But this would have to be done to save Elsa Peterson and John Worden, not to speak of Brother Gregori. A survival of the fittest.

"Snow!" called Krakorin, lashing the horse.

From a leaden sky the flakes were beginning to fall, big flakes, whirled on sudden volleys of wind, blinding, chilling. The steppe was wiped out in a flickering curtain. It came like pale blades from the sky, bending the bare trees, lifting the dry snow in lashing crystals. Eastward, from the icy wilderness, it drove at the sleigh.

Krakorin's scared face looked over his shoulder from the driving-seat.

"There is but one way in this," he said. "I am turning back."

"Stop, little comrade," called John Worden. "Let us discuss it for a moment."

He leaped lightly from the sledge; but Krakorin, out of his wits with fear of storm and freezing to death, whirled his whip threateningly.

"No discussion! Get in, fool!"

In a way, Worden was glad of the stinging crack of the whip against his cheek. It gave him the necessary blood-heat to spring at the schoolmaster and drag him from his seat—to stand him in the snow and drive a blow at his hatchet-chin that made a snapping sound as though it dislocated his neck.

WORDEN tightened the nest of rugs about Elsa, and put up the flimsy hood.

Even before he laid the whip over the horse's flanks, the snow had all but hidden the unconscious form of Comrade Krakorin; and it was unlikely that the little *Bez Prizorny* who had lived for a year in the sewers of Leningrad would ever be encouraged to serve the cause of anti-God by killing Brother Gregori, the God-merchant.

While the sleigh swayed through the blizzard that swept the snow in a white devil's-dance about it, John Worden leaned forward inside Krakorin's sheepskin coat and cracked the lash on the horse's straining withers without mercy. To think of returning to the Serguei monastery without Krakorin was impossible. Equally was it impossible to go back with him, since the storm had already wiped him out, where he lay behind, unconscious in the deepening snow.

No qualms of conscience assailed Worden. He had started out from the monastery with a cold-blooded purpose to get rid of the communist schoolmaster and thus prevent something diabolical happening to Brother Gregori. That was accomplished. If there was such a thing as shelter to be found, they could crouch in it till the snowstorm passed.

Already his leather gloves were frozen iron-hard. The miserable road was obliterated, and there was only the white steppe, and the howling tempest. The animal in the traces began to flounder in the drifts, to shiver and to neigh.

"There are trees over yonder!" The wind whipped away Elsa's cry, but Worden heard it. Krakorin's horse too must have already scented some sort of refuge, for he swerved out of the teeth of the gale, in spite of the lash. A forest clearing in which stood a small log hut became dimly visible through the fierce white mist.

"Luck holds yet."

Worden thrust his shoulder at the closed door of the hut. In harvest-time, perhaps, the place was used by some collectivist farm that slaved night and day under Stalin's scheme to turn Russia into a grain-producing country which was to make Canada and the American Northwest effete. But it was deserted now.

"We're safe here for a while," said John Worden. "I had to knock that young hyena out, Elsa. There was no other way."

"No," Elsa answered, rather lifelessly. The tragedy of Martin's death still stunned her, and it seemed an indifferent thing just then what became of herself.

"I don't believe it will last long. We'll reach some

village before nightfall—Vlanstak or some other place. By this time we must have shaken well clear of Feodora, though it would be wiser to get out of these clothes. They smack of Moscow and the towns too much; but we can't keep changing disguise. Russia's the last country in the world for that, with everybody card-indexed and pigeonholed as they are, nowadays." Worden tried to smile. "We've dropped a variety of cards over the place already. Comrade Elsa Peterson of the Lenin Hospital, Comrade Mitka Ivanovitch the mechanic, and—"

"Katerina Ogdanova, divorced wife of Martinovitch Georgiov." Elsa tried to smile also, but it was a failure. She huddled in her furs in a corner of the hut, and remembered that under the laws of Soviet Russia she was the legal wife of John Worden. The fact that she had given a false name, and that the whole business had been a masquerade, mattered nothing. Such little legal quibbles did not matter in Russia, either in marriage or divorce.

Worden lit a cigarette with his half-frozen fingers.

"And now wife of the aforesaid Mitka Ivanovitch," he said, lightly enough, though with a deepening of the tan in his weather-beaten face. "You've forgiven me about that, Elsa? It was a dippy plan, and as it happens, it failed. But I meant well."

"There was nothing to forgive. It was very necessary, at the time," answered Elsa, walking to the window of the hut to look out, though it was hidden deep in ice and snow.

"I'm going to get you out, Elsa. God helping me, I'm going to get you out, even yet. There are more doors than one."

"I don't want you to risk your life." Elsa laughed with a catch in her breath. "Listen to a little idiot talking! As though you hadn't risked it a dozen times already for Martin and me. But now Martin has gone, Russia seems nearly as good as anything."

She broke off a little lamely, as it sounded to herself. For a moment her glance flickered over him, and then went away. He was so big and fair. John Worden reminded her of some sort of bright metal just then. Copper bronze, perhaps. She was hunted with John Worden, homeless with him, marked for extermination at sight with him, married to him by a Soviet official with dirty fingernails. A not-too-clean marriage-card in her pocket proved that.

"Elsa, if you get the chance to get clear again, you'll take it?"

She took the kerchief from her head, shook her brown hair, rubbed her rather white cheeks, and answered slowly:

"I shall do whatever you order me to do, John."

Ivan the Drunkard lurched forward with the wooden stake. Worden took true aim with the revolver-butt.

Worden opened the door to look out into the spinning flakes. They seemed to be slackening a little, but he scarcely noticed it. He had come to Russia with the granite purpose of killing Boris Vladimir; but more than once something about Elsa had shaken it. Now the sight of the clear depths of her eyes shook it again. It was no namby-pamby twinge, but a wonder whether he could stay in Russia when she was gone away. Yet—Voronov in the hands of the Ogpu, Feodora perhaps ice-cold with desire for revenge, and themselves moving steadily away from the frontier again. . . . How could he get her out?

THERE were times—rare and carefully chosen, because in Russia one lived under a million eyes—when Comrade Boris Vladimir, People's Commissar, vanished behind the scarlet door by the Petrovka in Moscow, and became a private, a very private citizen.

On these occasions Vladimir changed into a silk robe, put on Turkestan slippers, and sat on cushions by the scented brazier, while Yogatai, his Mongol, prepared his pipe of hashish. Vladimir became very Oriental then.

The hashish gave him dreams—dreams not becoming a zealous communist. The thunder of the Soviet machine, the brotherhood of man, and the austere halls of the Kermlin faded away, and he was Ivan the Terrible, sit-

ting in a golden-domed palace, somewhere in his native Tiflis. Some day, soon, he hoped, that golden-domed palace would be his, as head-commissar of Tiflis, and this bitter Moscow, with its bleak madmen in the Kremlin, and its dirty multitude, half-starved with hunger and half-crazed with the brotherhood-of-man idea, would be forgotten in sun and wine.

"What a blessing there are no windows in one's head!" Vladimir murmured one evening a week or so after Martin Peterson had walked out of the Butyrka.

AS he cogitated, stretched upon a Bokhara divan, Yogatai padded softly in. In public Yogatai addressed his master as "Comrade Vladimir" and swaggered before Stalin himself in the uniform of a chauffeur of the Kremlin. But in private Yogatai was a very humble Mongol servant indeed.

"Madame Feodora has come, master. She tells me to assure you it is a private visit."

"That's kind of her." Vladimir experienced the slight jar that any contact with the Gay-pay-oo always imparted. "Tell her she's mistaken. I'm at the Kremlin."

"She would simply refuse to believe it," said a soft voice. "Isn't there room for even one woman in this bachelor's den of yours, Boris? Look at me and tell me you believe it's a private visit."

Feodora stood in the doorway, though Yogatai had carefully closed it behind him. Some magnificent furs fell from her shoulders, leaving a glint of jewelry about her white neck. She moved into the room with a forest-animal's grace, tiny shoes twinkling beneath the hem of her frock. Jack-boots and revolver-lanyard of the Ogpu officer were gone—it was a lovely woman, who approached.

"Don't grip my wrists too hard," Feodora said. "They're rather tender. I was strung up by them a few days ago. Can you imagine me giving an imitation of a crucifix?"

"You remarkable creature, what do you mean?" said Vladimir. His eyes kindled at the sight of her beauty, though the fire had died down in both Feodora and himself long before.

"It was in Minsk." Feodora sat down with a glance at the gently smoking brazier. "When I let John Worden, the American and that girl Peterson slip through my fingers, as you prophesied I would. We trapped them neatly in a house, but unfortunately the men of the Minsk section relaxed their vigilance. I was stunned from behind, by the girl's brother. Then my arms were strapped up to a beam while I was unconscious. Possibly it was the girl's brother who did that also. But I like to think it was John Worden."

"It must be very comforting!" said Vladimir ironically.

"It is." A shiver passed through her. But she smiled.

"They got safely across the frontier? So the great Three Letters do not always prevail."

"Careful, Boris!" The soft warning had the chill of ice in it. But when Vladimir, biting his lip, glanced at her, her topaz eyes were moving admiringly about the scented and voluptuous room. Yogatai had brought her coffee, and she sipped it.

"It is easy to see you're of the East. I shall call you Boris Khan, the Grand Cham of Tartary, I think. You must be a great zealot for the cause, to stay in Moscow. I hear there's word of you going to Tiflis, soon. It will be nice but lonely, unless you come across some beautiful Circassian girl. But even the Circassian women—"

"You promised to bring her back," said Vladimir, his glance resting on the woman. "I understood the Gay-pay-oo, and the Angel especially, kept every promise of that sort."

Feodora let a wisp of smoke drift from her mouth.

"It was a little like hell, coming back to life again, strapped up there—" she said with apparent inconsequence. "Only the knowledge that John Worden did it made me able to stand it. That's where a woman of my sort differs from a man of yours, Boris, I imagine. When you get little Elsa, you'll never forgive the trick she and Worden played on you in this very house."

Color whipped through Vladimir's cheek.

"By the way, your Elsa's brother died," she added.

Vladimir looked at the smiling creature, where she lolled on the divan with her coffee. He was glad she had long ago ceased to love him. . . In the country of the Cossacks by the Don marshes, from where she came, there were legends about werewolves who could turn into women of unearthly beauty and cruelty. Feodora was one of them, he was sure.

"I came to promise that you should have Elsa almost as soon as you wish," said Feodora, putting aside her empty cup. "I shall go now, Boris Khan, unless"—her mouth curved—"you would like me to stay, as I used to."

"You're the most beautiful woman in Russia," said Vladimir, whitening, but catching her hands. "You always were. How often have I told you?"

"Except Elsa!" The smile broke into a laugh. "Two men think that at the moment. It's quite humiliating. But perhaps things will change. I told you my wrists were still tender, Boris."

Yogatai let her out, and it seemed to Boris Vladimir that a tremor passed even through the giant Mongol as he moved by the clipped golden head. He found his own brow wet with mingled fear and wonder. . . .

There was a car waiting for Feodora in the Petrovka. Prima donnas, cinema-stars who made films under the tutelage of the state, and certain other women could drive about Moscow as luxuriously as in pre-Revolution days. It was not a black Ogpu car, but one in cream and gold. From it Feodora looked out of the plate-glass windows at the surging crowds. She smiled somberly, then put out the light inside the car, lest the Bright Angel be recognized.

At a little building in the black gullet of a street just outside the Kremlin walls the car stopped. Her arrival set a subtle movement of unseen watchers stirring. Half a dozen shadows glided from some doorway. In a little alcove at an upper window the muzzle of a machine-gun moved uneasily. There were tear-gas bombs, chemical-gas mortars, and even such medieval weapons as molten lead guarding the house of Menjinsky of the Ogpu, up in that lighted alcove. By such means Russia patrolled the high-roads to Paradise.

THE man who sat at the bureau in the steam-heated room was small and shock-headed. When he looked up from the papers before him, he showed the muzzle of a powerful ape, and the bright blue eyes of a child buried beneath white brows. But for the Sam Browne belt over his tunic, Menjinsky of the Ogpu might have been any little *bourjoi*, save that he was obviously not dying from starvation.

"Worden and Peterson—two Petersons? Ah, one died?" He made a small stroke with his pen, then looked at the document again: "And Vladimir, People's Commissar. I remember. Which is suspect?"

"Vladimir," answered Feodora.

"And the new recruit to the Gay-pay-oo?" The muzzle twitched beneath its white mustache.

"Worden."

"Tell me. The papers are all here—but I prefer to hear."

"Worden and the Peterson woman, with the woman's brother, escaped from the house in Minsk in one of our

cars. We traced them to the Serguei monastery, where the boy died. The man and woman killed a communist teacher and stole his sleigh, and at this moment they are disguised as peasants in a village in White Russia. Worden has a gift of disguise, and is without any sort of fear. He means to kill Vladimir some day. He will watch him like a cat till Vladimir destroys himself."

"Is he to be trusted?"

"Not at the moment," answered Feodora softly. "But he will be. I shall make sure of him."

"He loves you?"

"Of course."

The staring blue eyes looked across the office for a moment. Menjinsky did not smile. Women were part of his gigantic machine, just as were the bayonets of the Kremlin Guard, the wits of his agents and the fear of the proletariat for its own skin.

"So! I hold you responsible for this *D'Artagnan*, Madame Feodora. Naturally he will not leave Russia again."

"Never."

"That must be made quite sure when his work is finished. Now—Vladimir?"

"He is a traitor, but only in thought—yet. He will hang himself quite soon."

"Give him rope. I like to see a commissar hanged now and then." Menjinsky tapped the desk with his finger. "It shows the people there is no fear or favor. A pretty game. This Worden will watch Vladimir; you will watch Worden—"

"And somebody will watch me," said Feodora tranquilly.

"Who knows? Perhaps some one is even watching Menjinsky, and Stalin himself keeps well within the Kremlin." A short bark of a laugh left the little man as he rose. "And the girl Peterson: What part does she play?"

"None whatever," replied the Bright Angel.

FOR nearly a week the two young peasants, man and woman, who had limped into Borodotchi with nothing but their bundles, had stayed in the village. They had been brought before the local Soviet, and allotted a broken-down hut to live in. It chanced that some satanic American machine for cutting corn had been sent from Moscow to the collectivist-farm at Borodotchi, to help in the Five-Year Plan; and Mitka, the young man peasant, was the only one who could work it.

"Not that the poor devils have much corn to cut," said John Worden. "Look at them!"

His own belt was tighter than it had been for years. He and Elsa had walked into famine when they had come to Borodotchi. At Vlanstak, after abandoning Krakorin's horse and sleigh, they had bought peasants' clothes at a fair there, and trudged afoot over the steppe. The Polish frontier was no more than fifty miles from Borodotchi, and though that was cold comfort with no passports and the Gay-pay-oo watching, a dogged hope kept burning in Worden's breast. From that wretched village, if fortune were good, he might make a dash with Elsa. . . .

"They're suspicious of us," Elsa said. "They think we're communist spies, I think. They blame this collectivist idea on the communists, and say it's making them starve."

"We're starving with them, at any rate," said Worden.

He looked at Elsa with the feeling of desperation that had come to him of late. Though her cheeks still had their color, they were hollow, and her eyes seemed to be growing bigger. For days they had eaten nothing save black bread and sour milk. The rubles that lined Worden's clothes were useless. There was no food to be bought in Borodotchi. Only Worden's ability with the machine that cut corn for foreign countries and left Borodotchi starving, had earned them enough to eat.

"They killed some communists in the next village yesterday," said Elsa with a drawn smile. "It would be rather a joke if we were killed as communists too!"

WORDEN looked out the doorway of the miserable hut. The short day was drawing to darkness, and a melancholy yellow twilight lay over the snowy scene. A man in sheepskins slouched past, looked at them, and spat. It was the same man who had run amok with a wooden stake and beaten up half the stupid and frightened louts of the local Soviet, only the day before. There was a rumor that Ivan Isvolsky meant to smash up the American machine, when he could get drunk enough.

"I don't think they'd kill us. But they might run us out."

Worden put in place the batten of pinewood with which he barricaded the door after dark. He did it slowly, listening to the faint howl of wolves which prowled to the very edge of the village at nightfall. Borodotchi fell quiet, with only, here and there, a sullen light burning. Elsa lighted two candles, and the rusty stove gave forth a faint glow. Ivan Isvolsky began to sing hoarsely in the mud-paved village street. He had found vodka somewhere. Worden took Krakorin's revolver from his fur coat and slipped it into his pocket.

"Perhaps we'd better go in the morning while the going is good," he said thoughtfully; and then: "That clever old John Worden's got you into one hell of a mess after another, Elsa, hasn't he?"

Elsa shook her head. She smiled across the flame of the two candles.

"He's got me *out* of several. You forget I'm half-Russian and used to narrow escapes. If I got over the frontier where everything was safe, I should hardly know what to do. Especially if you just deposited me there." She turned her face to the stove, where some meager food was cooking. Worden felt a sudden desire to step behind her and hold her slim body fast.

"You must go, when the chance comes."

"Of course, if you tell me to. . . . Supper's ready, John."

They had lived together in that wretched little hut for five days, blanket-wrapped by night in their two separate corners. The No. 3 Office for Births, Marriages and Divorce in Moscow had made them man and wife under the Soviet laws. They were food for Russian laughter!

"Do you think the police have lost sight of us altogether?"

"I think so. One never knows, with the Ogpu. We'll make for some town on the frontier tomorrow, Elsa. Rubles are some good there, and some of the kulaks are ready to work a getaway, I'm sure, if you have the money—fellow like poor old Voronov. I heard today that there is an odd airplane working, even."

"And you'll go back to Moscow."

"Yes."

"Listen!"

It was Ivan Isvolsky, roaring very close to the hut. One or two of the village dogs were howling with him; otherwise there was quiet, yet a quiet that made Worden rise softly from the upturned soap-box where he ate.

"I'd better keep an eye on that roughneck," he said.

There was a piece of sacking over the window. As Worden reached it, there came a sudden flare of light outside, and the sacking shriveled away in red flames. Something fell into the hut and lay blazing on the wooden floor. It was a kerosene-soaked bundle of rags.

"Spies! Communists! Come out!"

More voices than that of Ivan the Drunkard were

there. Torches flared against the snow outside, showing stupid and bestial faces. A heavy crash fell upon the barred door. The devil had evidently found work for empty stomachs, though there might be no idle hands in Borodotchi. In Russia death reared its head on both sides, from ignorance as well as from intellect.

Worden stamped on the flaming bundle, and unfastened the door, first putting out the candles. With a cold rage, he stood in the doorway, looking out at the circle of faces. There was a momentary and almost sheepish silence. The peasants were besotted children, for the most part, Worden knew, and a word might send them away roaring with laughter. But Ivan the Drunkard, with the wooden stake that had routed the local Soviet, lurched forward. Worden took true aim at the inflamed face with his revolver-butt. Very coolly, he picked up the prostrate figure and flung it into the crowd.

"Use clean bandages, comrades," he said. "What is the trouble?"

"Moscow spy! Go back to Stalin!" It was a half-hearted shout now, but a large stone struck the logs by Worden's head. In the rutted village-street just then he caught the unaccustomed sight of motorcar headlights. They crawled slowly between the wooden houses, with something sinister about their radiance, and stopped.

"They must not go back. Tie them to the windmill-sails," cried a voice. "All wolves from the Kremlin must be served thus, till they let us keep our own food."

"SO?" The clear and incisive voice that came from the roadside made Worden's pulses leap. "We're patriots in Borodotchi, it is easy to see."

There was a paralyzed silence. Most horribly, to Worden's ears, an old peasant woman on the outskirts of the crowd began to moan as though she already keened over the dead. He saw the glint of a torch on an Ogpu cap and red-gold hair, before it fell quenched to the ground. The headlamps on the road below swerved and bathed with white light the ragged and half-starved throng about the hut as it broke and ran. . . . The flame-spurt and crack of a pistol came.

Worden put his hand out to the slender figure near him.

"You Jezebel! They'd have gone without shooting. How did you get here?"

Feodora laughed.

"They're only being chased into their houses, tender-hearted John. This is not a peasant rising and an Ogpu shooting. Where is your Elsa? I can get her over the frontier into Poland. Quick! Do you understand?"

The two, man and woman, stood looking into each other's eyes. There was harsh unbelief in Worden's, and an eagerness veiled by indifference in those of Feodora Federoff, the Bright Angel. A Russian oath left her lips.

"Must I explain, even at a moment like this? I have known you were here since you came. This was all staged. We do such things in Russia. Where is your Elsa?"

"Here." Elsa came from the hut. When she saw Feodora, she stopped. She said slowly:

"It was my brother who fastened you to the beam in Voronov's house, when you were unconscious. You can't pay him back, because he's dead."

"I shall always think it was John Worden," answered Feodora, with an inscrutable smile. "I don't want to pay him back for it. Quite the contrary. Are you Russian woman enough to understand that?"

Feodora turned to Worden, shrugging indifferently.

"I have the order from Menjinsky to put her over the frontier," she said. "Russia is tired of her; that's all. Sometimes we put people out, Monsieur Worden, and take a lot of trouble to do it, strange as it seems. I understand you came to this country to fetch her, and to pay back your enemy. Must we go over the story again?"

"Do I go too?"

"Menjinsky says not. He wants you. A Roland for an Oliver."

"If I could trust you, Feodora—"

"Don't—not on any account. But if Elsa wishes to—It would take, say, three hours to get out of Russia."

CARELESSLY she moved down to the car. A fugitive pistol-shot came from the blackness of the village. The light of a torch which still burned on the ground lit Worden and Elsa.

"It's a chance, Elsa." Worden found his voice a little husky. "They won't let you stay, you see. And—you've had enough."

"So I must go?"

"By heaven, I don't want you to," he said; and then: "But you must. It won't be long before I join you. You'll write; and so shall I, every week. Every day. It's out of the nightmare for you, Elsa!"

"And you'll stay in it—with the Ogpu. With her!"

"I'm using her. Using them all. I'll win through. Get inside, my dear."

They stood by the car, and a tremor passed through John Worden's frame. His pain at parting with Elsa, even though she was going to safety and civilization, was like a flood-light that revealed him to himself. He held her tightly. Till then she had been a very dear comrade, a brave and steadfast girl, filled with courage. But there in the village street of Borodotchi, while the Ogpu car waited to carry her to the frontier, John Worden knew that all the time she had been something infinitely more.

"God keep you, Elsa darling!"

She lifted her face, with a laugh that was smothered and shaking, but fiercely happy as his lips crushed hers. Elsa knew that she might never see John Worden again, but she knew that he loved her. Mitka Ivanovitch and Katerina Ogdanova, man and wife under the laws of Soviet Russia, had found each other at parting. . . .

"Good-by!"

She entered. The glow of a cigarette marked where Feodora stood aside, an apparently indifferent witness of the scene. Elsa heard her question to the driver.

"You know where. You have all the papers?"

"Yes."

THE car slid away into the darkness, and Elsa closed her eyes as she leaned back under the furs. It was all a dream, Martin lying under the apple-trees of the Serguei monastery, John Worden, the Ogpu—everything. Strangest dream of all was it that she, Elsa Peterson, was speeding to the frontier in a black car of the Gay-pay-oo.

Presently she looked out at the snowy landscape. It was a main road they traversed, a military road that ran straight to the frontier, so rutted, like every other road in Russia, that only slow progress was possible. Yet it seemed to Elsa that the car had slackened to a very slow pace indeed.

As the thought struck her, she became aware of a pale light that brightened the rear window, and looking out, she saw the headlamps of another car swing from some side road. There was a red spurt, and the crack of a pistol. One of the tires of the car that held her burst with a dull report. The vehicle sagged, swerved, stopped.

This thrilling story of a desperate attempt to slip through the grip of the Ogpu comes to an absorbing climax in the next, the May, issue.

The Trouble Shooter

A murder mystery, told in the simple fashion so characteristic of this writer's work.

By CHARLES LENT

Illustrated by Paul Orban

TROUBLE MAN is right — as you'll find out before I'm through, I guess; for when I went into the Pennsylvania Station in New York to take a train for up near Buffalo, I certainly ran into one mess of trouble.

Of course, Trouble Man (that's what I am) doesn't mean the sort of trouble I ran into—crooks, and murder, and all that. It just means that I work for the Intercontinental Machine Corporation in the New York office and that my job is to fix anything that goes wrong with our machines.

I drift around New York coaxing machines to go that balk, and smoothing down customers who are up in the air because our machines go on the blink when they're misused. Nine times out of ten it is the fault of some dumb bunny in charge of the machines and not the fault of the Intercontinental at all. You can't tell the customers that, though, and I have to take a lot of abuse. It all goes with my job. I was beefing about this to my boss one day, and he says to me: "Curly, did you ever stop to think that if a lot of people weren't dumb, you'd be out of a job? We wouldn't need a trouble man around here if we hadn't any trouble. So take it on the chin, kid; that's what you're drawing down your dough for."

When you think it over, that's right, too. So I go from Staten Island to way up in the Bronx, covering up other guys' mistakes. I never did get sent out of town, for my boss took all those trips. He liked to travel at the firm's expense and never gave me a look-in at the out-of-town jobs. But he took a trip the other morning that the firm didn't pay for. He came out of his house uptown, slipped on an icy step and kept on going till he landed in a hospital. That's how come they sent me upstate.

I came in from Greenpoint over in Long Island City, dirty and dog-tired, about four that same afternoon. I sure did hope I wouldn't be sent out again till the next morning; it would take me till quitting-time to make out my reports of where I'd been that day. But I no sooner hit the office than the manager sent for me. He told me the news about my boss. I was sorry; my boss is a good guy even if he does hog the out-of-town trips.

"I've got to send somebody out of town, Page," the manager told me, "and you seem to be elected. The cashier will give you expense money, and he has your transportation. Here are copies of the letters from the Keystone Company. You can look them over on the train. From what I gather they are having the same trouble as the Anchor outfit up in the Bronx where you went last week. You fixed them up; I guess you can do this job. Anyway, I got to send you. Your train leaves the Pennsylvania Station about six-thirty—the cashier knows the exact time and has your ticket and your berth."

I beat it out of his office and grabbed my transportation and expense-money from the cashier, ducked down into the subway and caught an uptown express. I felt important—my first trip out of town for the firm. I busted into the house, packed a bag, and changed my clothes and beat it back downtown. I made my train, easy, and was one of the first through the gate when the train was ready. The red-cap put my bag down, stuck out his fist, grabbed the tip I gave him and beat it.

I looked around me careful, not rubbering so anyone would notice. I was uneasy. I'd never traveled on a sleeper before, and I didn't know the ropes. Funny, for I'm twenty-three and know my way about little old New York a lot better than most. I'm wise to the city racket, but I wasn't wise to traveling. When the family goes away we go in our car. Yeah, we travel about as much as most, but we tour—don't travel in Pullmans.

I looked at my fellow-passengers. They seemed to be the usual lot—traveling men, middle-aged men with their wives, old ladies, a peach of a girl, and in the seat right across the aisle from me a young fellow—college fellow, he looked like. He acted as if he'd traveled plenty in Pullman cars—kicked his suitcase under the seat, tipped the red-cap, threw his hat up on the rack, drew out a cap from his overcoat pocket, pulled it down over his eyes and started to read his evening paper. The minute I saw his cap I was sorry I hadn't brought one with me.

The car filled up quickly. I wondered if some guy would have the upper over me, and if some one did what he would be like. Then I thought it might be a girl—well, if that turned out to be so, I knew what to do. I'd read of it in books and was hep to it that I ought to offer her my lower.

But it wasn't a girl—it was a man. He came hurrying in just before the train started. A funny-looking guy, he was. Sickly-looking, I thought. He had some eye-trouble, anyway, for he wore a bandage over his left eye and smoked glasses over that. He sat down opposite me and looked up and down the car. I didn't like to look at him—sitting so close, he might think I was staring at his eye; but I couldn't help seeing him looking careful up and down the car. He stiffened when he caught sight of the young fellow in the cap just across from us. Honest, he made me think of a bird-dog pointing, the way he stopped rigid and tense when he caught sight of that young

fellow. I turned my head to look at the young fellow too, wondering what was queer about him. The man saw me and slumped back in his seat and acted indifferent.

He didn't fool me, though. For some reason he was interested in that young fellow, who never looked up or noticed him. Mr. Bum Eyes took out his paper and hid behind it. If his eye was as bad as it looked, I thought reading in a moving train was bad for it. All I could see of him was his thumbs, and I took a dislike to them. Say, I can't stand overmanicured hands on anybody. It's bad enough in a girl, but in a man it seems doggone effeminate; and his nails were polished so you could see your face in 'em. A fellow wants to have decent-looking paws, yeah; but he don't have to let them shine like some chorus girl's mitts. I saw how he'd got a nasty dig last time he got a manicure, for there was a cut on his right thumb that must have been right painful when it happened, which looked like an hour ago. He nursed his thumb once after he'd turned a page of his newspaper, which made it a cinch that it hurt him.

The train started, and I walked back to the observation-car and was there when we came out from under the Hudson River. We slid across the meadows over in Jersey, and after we made a stop in Newark we hit the high spots on our way west. It was a swell train; the car I was in was called the club-car, and it was fine and dandy. A waiter came through, calling: "First call for dinner in the dining-car."

I waited a few minutes to see what the others did, and then followed them forward. I got a table by myself and ordered all the things I like and took my time eating them. I got a great kick out of sitting there eating, and looking out of the window at the towns we went through. This was a limited train, and we didn't stop at any of those towns—mostly suburbs, they were. Say, my dinner was good. Tell me, how can they cook so good in that little two-by-four kitchen on the train? I liked everything I had, and the finger-bowl didn't faze me when the waiter put it down in front of me. I'd seen a guy use it across from me, and I did just what he did, and scooped up my change, leaving a tip on the tray just the way he did too. No one in that diner was wise that I hadn't traveled a lot and knew my way around. I walked back to the club-car and lighted a cigarette, picked out a comfortable chair and looked at one of the magazines placed there for the passengers.

The young fellow in the cap came in and took the seat beside me and started to read. He couldn't seem to put his mind to it, though; he was nervous and fidgety. He drummed on the arm of my chair; and when I looked up, he said:

"Oh, I beg your pardon."

"That's O. K., buddy," I told him. "I act the same way when I've something on my mind."

"You said it," he answered. "I'm nervous as heck!"

Then he looked carefully up and down the car, leaned closer and said in a low voice:

"I've got reason to be. I'm on my way home to tell my folks I want to leave college and get married. They'll raise hell, probably."

"Don't they know anything about it?"

"Not a thing. They won't like it, but that won't stop me. I'm of age. I got a legal right to do what I want to do."

"Sure, you have," I agreed. "But you don't look any older than I am, and I haven't ever thought of getting married—not yet, I haven't."

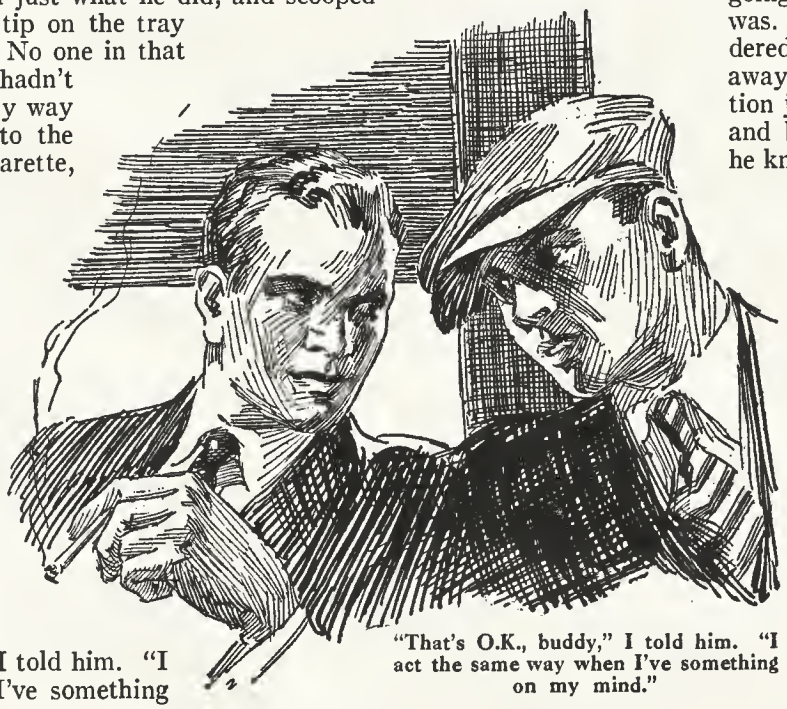
I was thrilled and pleased to have him confide in me this way. It made me feel man-of-the-worldish, and his conversation was a lot more interesting than anything in the magazine in my lap.

"That just proves that you haven't met the right girl yet," he explained. "When I went home for Christmas, I hadn't met Virginia, and I was just like you. Getting married hadn't entered my head. But I hadn't been back at college a week before I met her, and I've hardly thought of anything since but getting married to her."

"Love at first sight?" I asked.

"Exactly. Don't let anyone tell you that can't happen."

Well, he got real confidential with me, and me with him. I told him where I was going, and why. And he told me all about himself. How he was within a few months of my age, how his folks wanted him to be an engineer, and how he was going to Columbia University, which is right in New York City. How he and some of his frat brothers got in the way of going to a dance place in New York. One of those places that advertises "No Cover Charge At Any Time." The Pink Dragon was its name. There is where he'd met his girl—she danced there. Yeah, it seems she was an actress, and that was one of the things he expected his folks to kick about. They were Presbyterians, his folks, the strict kind; and his wanting to marry an actress would make no hit a-tall with his family, and well he knew it. Yeah, as he told me more and more about it, I didn't wonder any that he was nervous; he sure had reason to be, going home on the errand he was. I looked at him and wondered why he was throwing away his chance of an education just because he was all hot and bothered about a girl. If he knew as much as I did about business, he'd know that to be a "big shot" in business you need to know a lot. He showed me the picture of his girl that he carried in his wallet. She was a cute-looking little trick, and looked as nice as he said she was. But still and all, he hadn't a Chinaman's chance to get his family's O. K. on those wedding bells.



"That's O.K., buddy," I told him. "I act the same way when I've something on my mind."

We smoked and talked a long time. Most of the people in the club-car went away and to bed, and we still talked. Mr. Bum Eyes came in and sat down opposite us but paid no attention to us or to anybody else, just ordered some ginger ale, and when it came took a flask out of his hip pocket, poured himself a drink and was

sitting there still when me and the young college fellow got up and left. The young fellow's name was Clarence Halliday, and he was a nice guy. I liked him fine. He lived in a town near Buffalo and I found we were taking the same train out of Buffalo in the morning. We fixed it up to have breakfast together in the station. From things he let drop, I knew his folks were the whole works in his home town. That wasn't no lie—I found out about that afterwards. I said "Good night," to him when we got back to our car, and he answered polite and casual. I never suspected that he'd be dead before morning. . . .

I found my berth made up, and a lot of folks had gone to bed. I wondered how I was going to get my clothes off and in bed without the whole car being next to it that I was green. I sat down in a berth that wasn't made up yet and kept my eye on young Halliday and then did just the way he did. I got my clothes in the hammock, my shoes under the berth, into my pajamas, and in bed. Then, I couldn't put out my light. I tried every way I knew and had to give it up. I lay back resigned to having the light on all night. I didn't care—I didn't expect to sleep much anyway. I heard Mr. Bum Eyes come in and go to bed over me. Then I reached up my hand, and bing—the light worked as easy as can be, and I was in the dark. But I couldn't sleep, what with the noise of the train, and not being used to it and all. I'd never had insomnia; usually I'm asleep two minutes after I strike the hay, but not this night. The guy over me couldn't sleep either; I could hear him every time he turned over. I won't say I didn't sleep any; I did, but I kept waking up. We stopped some place in the middle of the night and a man in overalls came along the train and tapped with a hammer on the wheels or something under the train. Gee, it was a long night. Along toward morning I slept, but I woke up long before the time I'd told the porter to call me. I decided to call it a night and get up. I dressed complete, even to my collar and tie, before I started for the wash-room. I didn't like the idea of going down that aisle half dressed even if the passengers were asleep. I forgot to take my watch and wallet out from under my pillow, went off without once thinking of them, though I'd felt for them about every fifteen minutes all night.

The train got into Buffalo at six, and I was due to take a local train out of there at six-thirty. It wasn't five yet when I went into the wash-room, so I had lots of time.

I had a hard time shaving myself. It took me about three times as long as usual, and it wasn't what you'd call an A No. 1 job when I'd finished, but I did it. I reached into my pocket for my watch to see what time it was and I nearly hit the ceiling when I found I didn't have it on me nor my wallet with all that expense-money in it and a lot of my own dough besides.

I tore out of that wash-room like I was going to a fire. I certainly was scared. The very first time the firm sent me on the road—and maybe some crook had my watch and wallet in his jeans that minute! The train stopped just then, and as I went out I collided with Mr. Bum Eyes, who was getting off. He gave me a dirty look out of the one eye that wasn't covered with a bandage, and

Honest, he made me think of a bird-dog pointing, the way he stopped when he caught sight of that fellow.

I stepped back in the wash-room and let him pass. A moment later he was going down the car steps and I was running for my berth.

Say, do you know, I couldn't find it. I'd left the curtains unbuttoned, and I'd have sworn that I could walk right back to it—but I couldn't. The green curtains hung down both sides of the aisle, and every berth looked like every other one. I got to what I thought was mine and parted the curtains, only to see that I'd made a mistake for there was a guy in there asleep. All I saw was that it was a man; he didn't move, and I backed away thanking my lucky stars that I hadn't peeked into a berth where there was a dame. I felt embarrassed enough as it was. The train started, and the porter came back into the car. I hated to ask him where my berth was and have him take me for a hick, but I had to have my wallet. It was the choice of two evils, so I said:

"Where's my berth, George?"

"Right beside you. You're in Lower 6."

"That's what I thought, but it aint. There's a guy in there asleep."

"Not in there, boss. That's your berth."

I got impatient, at that.

"Look for yourself. I say there's a man in there."

The porter didn't argue, but parted the curtains. Sure enough, he saw I was right. He turned to me, letting the curtains fall back in place, he looked puzzled.

"There sure is somebody there, boss, but just the same it's your berth."

"Wake him up, George. I want my watch and my wallet that I left under the pillow."

"Sure, sure, I'll get 'em."

The porter reached his hand through the curtains and twitched the blankets in an effort to wake the guy up. It was no go. Then the porter spoke to him, not loud, for it was early and all the passengers were asleep. The guy didn't answer, and the porter got a little peeved. "He

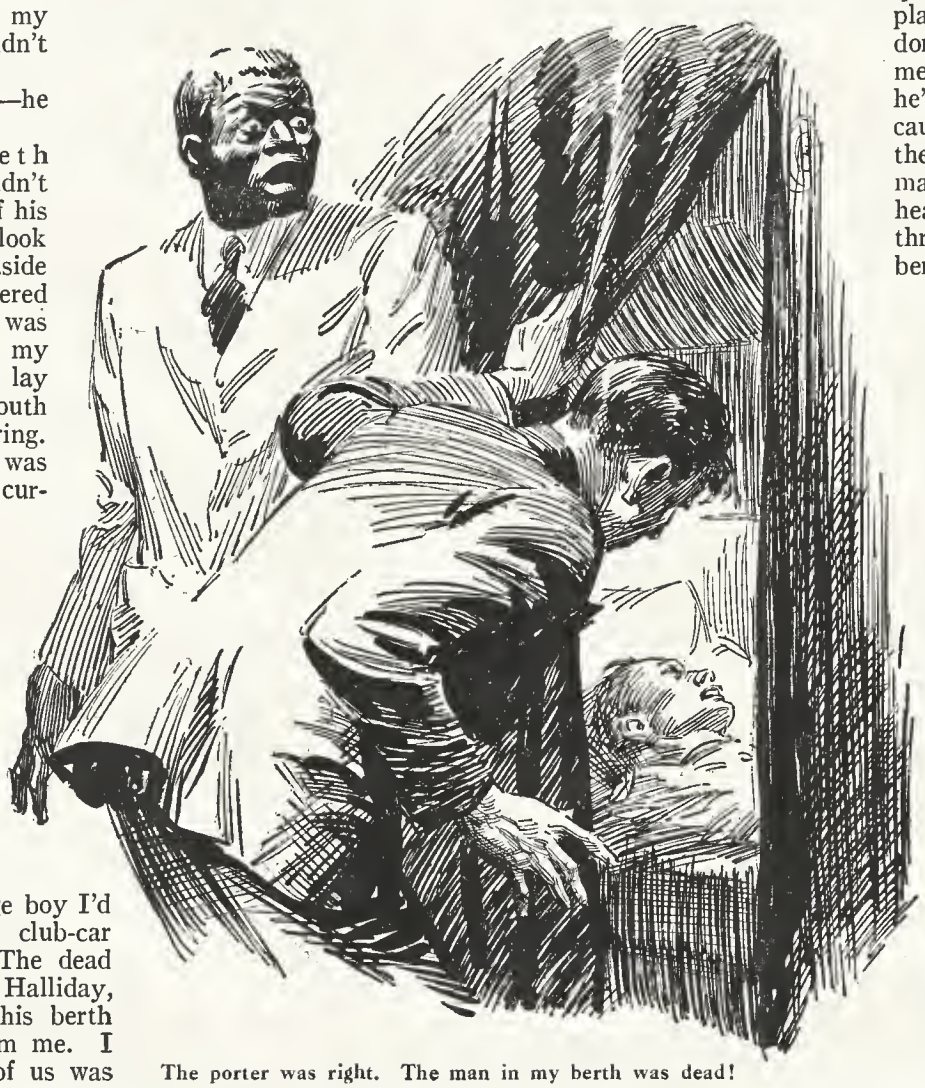
aint got no right in your berth nohow," he said to me over his shoulder as he stuck his head between the curtains, reached in and gave the fellow a shake.

In a moment he fell back against me and turned a frightened face to me. I couldn't imagine what the trouble was, butI knew it was serious, for the porter looked absolutely ghastly. He was so scared he couldn't talk. Finally he managed to gasp: "He aint asleep. He's daid!"

I could feel the hair rise on the back of my neck. Even so, I didn't take it in at first.

"Dead? Why, no—he can't be."

The porter's teeth chattered so he couldn't speak, but a wave of his arm invited me to look for myself. I drew aside the curtains and peered in. The porter was right. The man in my berth was dead: he lay there with his mouth open, his eyes staring. One terrified glance was enough; I let the curtains fall back into place and went after the porter to the wash-room. I felt sick, nauseated when I got there and did not realize for some minutes that I'd ever seen the man before; then suddenly it dawned on me that the dead man in my berth was the college boy I'd talked with in the club-car the night before. The dead man was Clarence Halliday, who should be in his berth across the aisle from me. I don't know which of us was the more frightened. The porter pulled himself together first and said he was going to find the conductor. I couldn't bear to be left there alone and insisted that I must go with him. We found the conductor forward, and between us managed to tell him.



The porter was right. The man in my berth was dead!

He didn't believe us at first; then, convinced that something serious had happened, he started back with us. One look was enough. He was on the job in a minute. He locked the doors of our sleeper at either end, ordered the porter to wake the other passengers and allow no one to leave. In a few minutes we'd be in the Buffalo station, and there detectives would take charge. He left us to go through the train to try and find a doctor on board. The porter and I went back to the wash-room. Gee, we were scared. A man from Lower 12 came into the wash-room blinking and started to wash himself. He reminded me of a grampus the way he snorted and grunted while he dashed water over his face.

The conductor came back with a doctor who took one look and pronounced the boy dead, then declined to do anything more, saying that the police surgeon would make an examination, and he'd better not disturb anything. The porter went around and woke everyone up, and in a few minutes we drew into the Buffalo station, and in short order detectives simply swarmed over our car.

The boy was dead: he'd been strangled with part of a fish-line that had been twisted around his neck. We men were herded to one end of the car and the women at another, and they put us through an examination.

Mr. Bum Eyes was missing, and the more the cops questioned us, the plainer it was that he'd done the murder. I remembered how funny he'd acted when he first caught sight of the boy the night before. The man in the upper had heard young Halliday thrashing around in his berth below him and had roused just enough to look through his curtains and see Mr. Bum Eyes standing in the aisle between Halliday's berth and mine.

As near as they could make out, the murderer had meant to push the body out of the window onto the tracks, but the wakefulness of the man in the upper berth made him change his plans. Seeing that my berth was empty, he moved the body there, meaning to open my window and push the body out on the tracks on that side—but the porter came down the car, and he had to give up that idea and left the train where I saw him get off.

They took us out of the sleeper into the station and put us in a room for further questioning. They brought us some breakfast, but nobody wanted any. They checked up on us all—I know for a fact they phoned my office to get the dope on me. Along around noon they told us we could go. They brought me my watch, wallet and suitcase, and I took the first local train I could get away from there. I heard that they'd photographed the inside and the outside of the car and looked for finger-prints before they moved young Halliday's body.

It was a good thing that I was busy till late that night working over a machine. Yeah, it was just as I'd expected —just dumb carelessness on the part of the guy who ran it. It was nearly midnight when I got to my hotel and had a chance to get something to eat and could buy an evening paper. It had an account of the murder in it. The front page didn't have much else. Say, this young Halliday's folks were important. They were leading citizens in the town out of Buffalo where they lived. Owned a slice of the First National bank, part of the gas com-

pany and of anything else in town worth having. It was all in the paper, with a picture of the boy. It gave me a lump in my throat to see the picture. There was nothing about his reason for coming home; I guess nobody knew that but me—and the girl. Poor kid, I hoped some one had broken the news to her gently.

Next morning I was busy out at the Keystone plant making sure that machine wouldn't lay down on me again. It was running as sweet as my watch and I decided it was safe for me to start back. I went into Buffalo, reported to the police like I'd promised I would, and they said it was O. K. for me to leave. First they got me to sign a statement of all I knew, which wasn't much. I went to the station, got my ticket and my berth and went to the lunch-counter to get something to eat. I got an upper berth for the trip back—thought it was safer in case a maniac went strolling around in the night choking people to death. Yeah, that's the way the cops doped this thing out; the man with the bad eyes was crazy, they thought. I parked myself on a stool at the lunch-counter, looked the menu over careful, ordered ham and eggs, apple pie and coffee. While I was waiting for it, I slid off the stool and strolled over to the news-stand and bought me my favorite New York paper. I propped it up in front of me and began to eat. I'd hardly started when my eyes caught the headline: "Broadway Butterfly Strangled."

I READ the headlines and began to tremble. It was intuition, I guess; but I was ready to take my oath right then what the name of the girl would be. I was right. Virginia Baker had been choked to death in her room with one of her own silk stockings. Yeah, young Halliday's girl!—and when I got hold of my shot nerves and forced myself to read the details, I found that she had been killed about the same hour as Halliday. This was more than I could stand. I pushed back my plate, and asked for my check.

The girl stared at me.

"You aint eaten a thing. What's wrong with it?"

"Nothing. I just don't feel so good all of a sudden." She gave me a sharp look and saw I wasn't kidding. If I looked the way I felt, I must have looked terrible. She made out my check. I put down a dime tip, staggered over to the cashier's desk, paid my check and walked out.

I was scared and puzzled. I guess I was the only person to see any connection between the murder on the train and this one. But I knew these kids were in love with each other and engaged, and now they were both dead. Both choked to death! I wondered what I ought to do about it. Should I tell the Buffalo police? I didn't know. Then I thought they wouldn't have jurisdiction over a murder in New York. That was New York City's cops' business. If I said anything, I might be held here for days. I couldn't stand that, for suddenly home looked awful good to me. Traveling might be fun for some, but this one trip had cured me of wanting to do any more of it. I wanted to see my folks and get where I wouldn't be mixed up in murders. So, feeling a little guilty, I got on board the train and in the club-car finished reading that New York paper.

The reporter who'd written the account was short on facts but long on imagination. About all I got was that a cabaret dancer, Virginia Baker, had been found dead in her room in a theatrical rooming-house. It was a perfectly respectable place, and the girl had been quiet and well-behaved. The landlady was too busy to keep tabs on the comings and goings of her roomers—a lot of them worked in night-clubs and came in at all hours in the morning. The reporter wrote a lot of hooey about a young girl who'd come to New York and singed her wings in the lights of Broadway. A lot he knew about it! Why, I knew more of the inside facts than he did. I knew the girl and the college boy were engaged, and nobody else knew that. One thing puzzled me: It was impossible for Mr. Bum Eyes to croak young Halliday in the sleeper and at the same time kill the girl in New York. Even in a plane he couldn't get from the scene of one killing to the other in time. Were there two maniacs? The more I thought of it, I doubted if there was even one. There was some connection, but I was too dumb to figure it out. I was mighty upset by it all. This second murder coming right on top of the first one about finished my nerves.

Say, do you know I couldn't make up my mind to go to bed? I went back to the sleeper with every intention of going to bed in that upper I'd bought and paid for; but when I'd kicked off my shoes and the porter was holding the ladder for me to climb up, I looked up and down the car and saw the green curtains swaying with the rush of the train, and suddenly I felt sick. I just couldn't climb up the ladder. I put on my shoes and went back to the club-car and sat up all night.

Sitting up in the club-car wide-awake as an owl, I kept going over the facts I knew about these two murders. All I could see clearly was that they couldn't have been done by the same person. That was plumb impossible. You can't croak a boy on the Buffalo sleeper and at the same time bump off a girl in the West Forties in New York. But there was a connection.

Now, there are a lot of murders in New York. One a day is my guess without looking up the statistics, and sometimes two or more on Saturday nights and Sundays. I remembered that article in the paper, and it made me sick all over to think that whoever had killed this boy and girl was likely to go scot free. I know I only talked to this college boy that one night in the club-car, but I could tell he was a good guy, and I believed him when he said his girl was a nice girl. This Broadway Butterfly stuff didn't go down with me. I felt dreadfully sorry for both those young folks; it seemed a shame that the chances were against their murderers ever being caught.

"Murderers," I said to myself softly. "Murderers!" Then I got it. Surest thing you know, some gang had done this. They had it in for the two love-birds and had them put on the spot. It must be a gang, for one person didn't do both killings. How come they didn't wait for the first guy to get back from his job on the sleeper to do the girl in? 'Cause they couldn't. The answer to that was easy. The minute this Virginia girl hears her sweetie is dead, she'd have made a squawk. And the same thing was true of the boy if the girl had died first. He'd have made an awful holler and would have known who to suspect. They had to prevent that by having the murders simultaneous, you might say.

AND I was right about that; I was proved so later. No, I don't take credit to myself, and I'm not giving up my job to be a detective. I just had some inside facts that the cops didn't know till I told 'em.

I streaked it for home from the Pennsylvania Station, bleary-eyed from lack of sleep. That porter thought I hadn't ought to be allowed to travel without my keeper, I could see, but a lot I cared. And oh, boy, maybe home didn't look good to me when I got there! I gave the folks an earful. They'd read about the murder on the train, but it hadn't registered. It was just another murder to them. They didn't get that it happened on the train I was on. They sat up and took notice when they heard the real facts from me.

At the office they kidded me about out-of-town cops phoning in about my moral character—thought it was a

great joke on me. I let 'em laugh. Me, I didn't feel like laughing any. I'd seen that poor Halliday kid lying in my berth, black in the face, choked to death, and it made me feel darn' serious. I walked in to the manager and told him what I knew, and asked his advice about what I ought to do.

He was some puzzled himself. Murders, cops and all that were out of his line, he said; the best thing for me to do was to see the District Attorney. And that's what I did. The guy I saw was an assistant district attorney, and one of the first things he asked me was if I'd recognize the man who had the berth over me.

"Would I? Why, sure I would. He had a bandage over one eye and wore smoked glasses, and had black hair, and I'd know him anywhere."

"Yeah," the D. A. says. "You mean you'd know him if he looked just the way he did on the train. But suppose that was a disguise? Would you know him if he hadn't a bandage and wasn't wearing smoked glasses?"

"Well, that's different," I told him.

The D. A. thanked me for bringing him the dope I had, hesitated and then asked:

"Would you be willing to help a bit more, Mr. Page?"

"I certainly would," I told him. "What is it?"

He held up his hand.

"Not too fast. I'm not sure I ought to permit you to do it. It might be dangerous. I can't ask you to do it without warning you of that."

"I don't care. I want to do anything to bring that killer to the chair. Gee, I only talked to that chap Halliday one evening, but he was a prince. I'd like to help get the guy who choked him. That was horrible. Why didn't he pull a gun on him instead of choking him to death?"

"That's one of the points in the two murders, Mr. Page. He couldn't shoot Halliday without instantly rousing the whole car, and a shot in the rooming-house would have brought the people in the house to the scene. You see, the murders had to be silent. No, Mr. Page, on second thoughts, I can't let you do what I had in mind. It's too dangerous. If this man recognized you, as he easily might, the consequences for you might be serious. I have two murders to solve now; I don't want a third."

"You mean," I almost whispered, "that he'd put me on the spot?"

"I mean just that. I'd have some of my men near you, but I can't take the risk."

I sat back thinking. This wasn't really my fight. New York City paid cops to catch murderers. There was no reason a-tall for me to do a volunteer-fireman act. The sensible thing for me to do was to lay off. Then I remembered how that college fellow had looked when he was showing me the picture of his sweetie, and I saw red.

"I'll do it, whatever it is. I insist on doing it."

WELL, the D. A. didn't accept my offer right away, but he finally gave in. That's how come I was sitting at a table in the Pink Dragon that night around midnight with a lady cop. Yeah, me out with a lady dick!

I did just as I was told. About eleven I called at the rooming-house where Virginia Baker had been killed and asked for Miss Louise Field. That was the lady cop's name. I dunno whether it was her right name or not. She had taken a room there. She must have had nerve to move right in where there had been a murder. It gave me a thrill. Pretty soon this Miss Field came down to me. Say, she didn't look like a detective. She looked just like anybody, young, and pretty. And did she have class? I'm telling you she did. She looked like a business girl with a darn' good job.

We acted just like any other couple. If anyone saw us, all they could think was that I was taking my girl friend out, and that I was a good picker. I wanted to ask her a lot of things, whether she liked her job, wasn't it dangerous, and did she carry a gat? But I didn't.

Just as we went into the Pink Dragon, she whispered: "All you do is to look the crowd over and see if there is anyone there that looks like the man on the train. Do nothing if you do recognize anyone, but pass me the word if you can. But watch your step."

All I did was nod my head.

I'D never been in the Pink Dragon; I went in expecting all sorts of things—gangsters, trapdoors and what have you? It wasn't like that at all; it was big and a darn' sight quieter and more respectable than I had any idea it would be. Why, they didn't sell booze there, for one thing, and it didn't look like the hang-out of gangsters and such. Just a lot of average young people out for an evening of clean fun. The floor show had lots of pep to it; the food was good, and reasonable as such things go in New York.

Miss Field seemed to know a lot of folks in the Pink Dragon, and I had no way of knowing whether they were police or the crooks we were looking for. She didn't tip me off, either. I danced with her a couple of times, and while she danced with other men, I watched the crowd. I was hep to one thing right away, and that was that an old man with a party at a big table was the petted darling around there. The waiters ran if he raised a finger; the orchestra put all they had into their saxophones when he was on the floor, and I wondered if he was some big shot in politics that they all tried so hard to please him. Miss Field put me wise. "Money," she told me. "Money to throw to the birds, apparently. He tips everyone in the place when he's pleased. A big oil man from out West, I understand."

This old fellow's name was Moore. He liked the looks of my girl friend and got some one to introduce him; then he insisted that we join his party. He didn't act crazy about me but he had to include me and I found myself sitting at his table. He'd come East to have his fling; and believe me, he was having it. He told me that when he was my age he worked eighteen hours a day and didn't have any fun, and he meant to have it now. It was just a case of going through the rah-rah stage about fifty years late. The old geezer could dance, too!

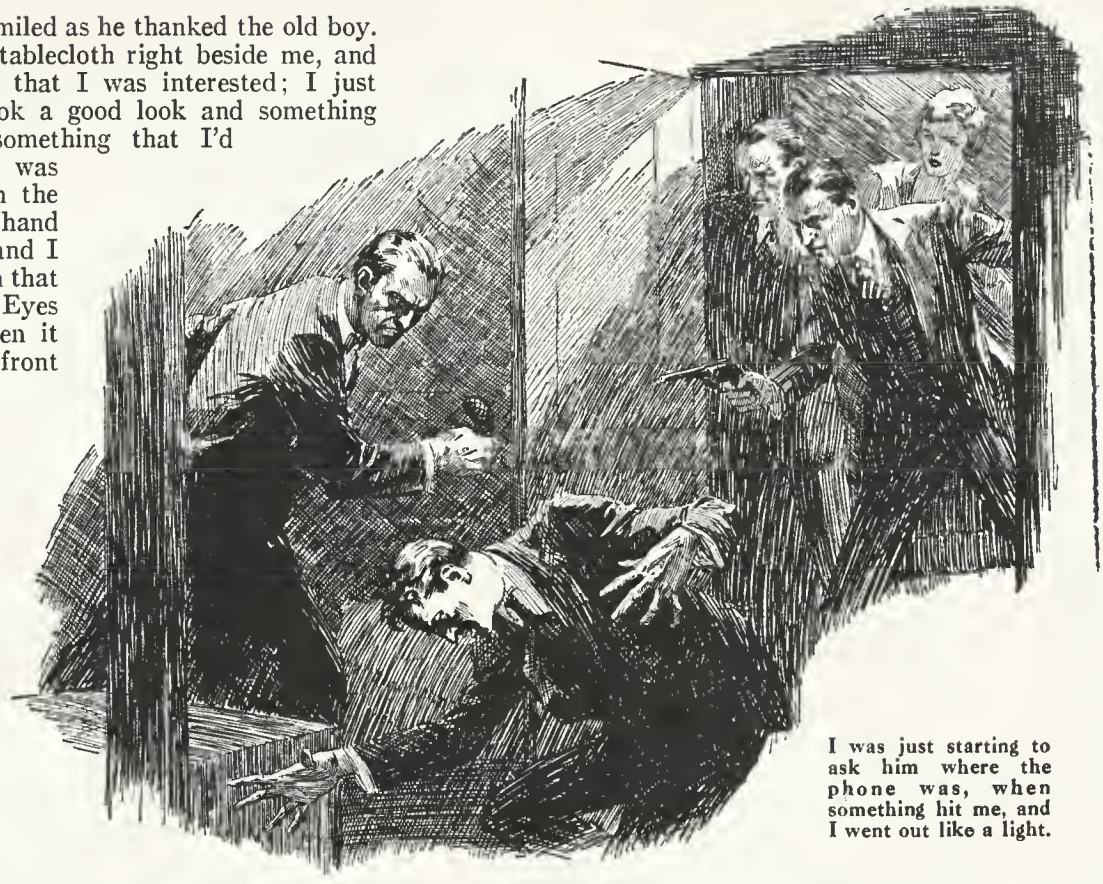
It got late, and I considered the evening wasted. I hadn't laid eyes on anyone that looked like the man in the sleeper, and no one who looked as if he'd hurt a fly. I decided that D. A. had been kidding me about being in danger. Danger? This place looked about as dangerous as a strawberry festival at the Methodist Church parlors in some country town. Well, hardly that; for the clothes some of the girls wore, and the way some of the couples danced would have panicked the good church folks.

I gave up looking for my man. Miss Field asked me under her breath, "Any luck?" And I had to shake my head "No." I was wondering if it wasn't about time to go, and was waiting for the lady cop to give me a hint, when the old boy at whose table we were called the head-waiter over to him. This head-waiter's name was Louie, it seems, and he came a-running. He was all smiles, for he knew what was coming. The old boy drew out a roll that would choke an elephant, peeled off a big bill, handed it to this Louie for the boys in the orchestra, and another for Louie himself.

His table was close to the dance-floor, and a couple dancing by bumped into Louie, and he put his hand, palm down, on the table beside me to steady himself, as he

bowed, and smirked and smiled as he thanked the old boy. Louie's hand was on the tablecloth right beside me, and I glanced at it idly—not that I was interested; I just happened to. Then I took a good look and something clicked—I remembered something that I'd forgotten entirely when I was talking to the D. A. On the thumb of Louie's right hand was a cut, a nasty cut—and I remembered where I'd seen that thumb before. Mr. Bum Eyes had a cut thumb—I'd seen it as he held the paper in front of his face across from me in the Pullman. But, I told myself, Louie couldn't be Mr. Bum Eyes. Louie's eyes were black and sparkling, nothing the matter with them. Still, Louie would look different with smoked glasses on.

I leaned closer to his hand — no, I wasn't mistaken. I'd seen that cut thumb on the Pullman. Louie was leaving; he raised his hand, and I turned my head back and looked straight into his eyes. I must have looked guilty, or something, for Louie paused for just a second and stared down at me. He recognized me, all right; for a fraction of a second we looked at each other and his glare made a cold chill go down my spine.



I was just starting to ask him where the phone was, when something hit me, and I went out like a light.

Then Louie was gone. At the next table he leaned over to ask if everything was satisfactory, and with a smile and a bow was gone.

It left me uneasy, that look of his, and I would have been glad to leave, but Miss Field said she'd like to dance. I got up, and we were out on the floor before she said anything more.

"Any luck?" she wanted to know then.

I was so excited that I trembled and I wanted to spill it all to her right off. She wouldn't let me, said we might be watched.

"It's Louie, isn't it?"

"Yes, the man in the upper berth."

"I rather thought it might be."

That's all she'd say or let me say. She went collegiate on me and started a lot of funny steps that kept me guessing. I'm some hoofer myself, so they tell me, and I let her see she hadn't anything on me. The boys in the orchestra must have had Moore's tip, for they sure did give us some hot music for that dance.

We no sooner got back to our table than a guy insisted on Miss Field's dancing with him. I stayed where I was and watched them and wondered about Louie.

A waiter touched my arm and said I was wanted on the phone. I thought it was the D. A. who wanted me. I got right up and followed the waiter and never even hesitated. Was I a simp? I'll tell the world I was. But I had just one idea in my noodle, and that was to tell the District Attorney that I knew who'd killed young Halliday. I pretty nearly ran for that phone.

The waiter led me down some steps to the lavatory and through a door into a dimly lit basement. I looked around for a telephone-booth and didn't see one, and even then I wasn't hep to what was up. I was just starting to ask him where the heck the phone was, when something hit me—and I went out like a light.

It was Louie hit me, but he didn't get away with it. That lady cop was onto her job. She saw me streaking it across the floor, and she followed, first giving the high sign to a couple of her pals that were close by, just as the District Attorney had told me they would be. Then three of them caught Louie red-handed, you might say. For they saw him strike me; and when I came to with a doctor and the lady cop leaning over me, Louie had a pair of handcuffs on, and he and his waiter pal were starting for the electric chair. . . .

They stopped off long enough to be tried, but to the chair they went. And it was an open-and-shut case against them when the cops told what they knew. Very simple: Louie was greedy; not satisfied with lavish tips that Moore gave him, Louie wanted more and he laid his plans to frame the old guy.

He made a big mistake when he suggested to Virginia Baker that she help him fleece the old man. Louie picked on her because this Moore was crazy about her dancing and came to the Pink Dragon night after night just to see her dance. Virginia told Louie where he got off, and naturally she told young Halliday—who threatened to knock Louie's block off, first, and warn Moore, second.

As Louie saw the thing, he had to silence them both. He followed Halliday aboard the sleeper, and his waiter pal followed Virginia home. They silenced them both. . . . Well, they paid for it, both of them, the other day!

Louie saw me looking at his thumb. That was enough for him. He recognized me as the man in the sleeper, and if it hadn't been for the quick-witted lady cop—well, no telling what might have happened to me.

Yeah, I'm still trouble man downtown, but I don't aim to mix in any more murders. Once in a lifetime is plenty. I gotta go to Schenectady tomorrow. I'm going by daylight in the parlor car.

The Last of the Dinosaurs

You may have faint misgivings about the historical accuracy of this little idyl of wilderness life, but we think you will enjoy it none the less.

By BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by Margery Stocking

THE hero of this story was behind the times, old-fashioned and out of date, for he had stood still while the world went forging ahead. He was about forty million years behind—for he was a dinosaur, and he rightly belonged to that age which is known as the Mesozoic, when the world was largely populated by reptiles. Not necessarily squirmy reptiles, but reptiles of all shapes and sizes—out-sizes and unfits, for the greater part.

Steggy—for so during his brief Twentieth Century career the dinosaur came to be familiarly known by the press, chiefly no doubt because he belonged to that group of dinosaurs called *Stegosaurus*—was one of the out-sizes. He bore a close resemblance to an animated tank, except that he was much more warty, and that he had a spine rather like an overgrown crosscut saw—kind of notchy.

He was larger, too, than a tank, approximating more nearly to the size of a small chapel, or a police-station. . . .

The awakening of Steggy from the long sleep which had put him so far behind the times was so very spectacular that it can never be sufficiently regretted that there was nobody present to witness it. It was the bursting of a glacier in which for so many millions of years he had peacefully slumbered, that awoke him.

In those far distant days before Steggy embarked upon his lengthy sleep, the haunt of the big dinosaur had been somewhere north of the region now known as Alaska. There he had lived a comparatively peaceful life, browsing harmlessly about the district on anything that came his way—trees, grass, leaves, smaller dinosaurs, and any other of his quaintly shaped neighbors that were sufficiently ill-advised to get within reach of him.

Then had come an unusually bitter winter—and one morning the dinosaur, after a particularly heavy supper (he had come upon a fat Triceratops cub when it wasn't looking) had overslept himself. True, he had half-awakened at his usual time. But he was very sleepy and felt heavy. This heavy feeling was probably due to the fact that he had been so severely snowed upon that he was buried under some thirty-five feet of snow weighing many tons. He was not hungry; the late Triceratops cub was lying rather weightily upon his chest, so to speak; and he had simply turned over and renewed his slumbers. The snowstorm continued for some six months on end, and the frost did not cease for some millions of years.

The result was that when Steggy next woke he felt heavier than ever. It was dark, too, and he seemed cramped for room. He decided to wait for daylight—entirely unaware that there was plenty of daylight some hundreds of yards above his head, and without the least notion that to burst his way up to it was a feat far beyond even his gigantic strength. So he slept again, and the ice continued to accumulate round him. Year by year it piled up over and around the entombed dinosaur. Colossal snowstorms swelled the accumulation, incredible frosts turned the snow to ice, and razor-edged prehistoric blizzards polished the mountainous pile. But Steggy neither knew nor cared. He was curled up down below, with a few million tons of ice on him, and he was out of the snow and the wind.

Years, centuries, epochs, ages passed over his weary head; polar seas formed about him, and were worn away, melted and disappeared. Geology took place, and carried on business for years all about him, failed, went out of business, lay dormant for a while, re-started and went through the same process over and over again. The Jurassic, the Cretaceous, the Eocene and Oligocene ages went flickering over Steg's head like bats. So did the Miocene, the Pliocene and the Pleistocene.

But they did not interfere with old Steg.

Earthquakes, erosions, upheavals and floods, tidal waves and catastrophes occurred in the neighborhood by thousands; but even if he could have heard them at all (which he could not), they would have seemed no more than the far-off gentle sigh and murmur of zephyrs. Volcanoes came into action not far away, worked hard for their allotted space, became extinct, crumbled away and trees grew over them into vast forests which ultimately became coalfields and in turn were washed away by new oceans. But it made no difference whatsoever to the slumbering dinosaur.

And so the world grew old and more reasonable. It settled down and gave up many of its wilder and more irresponsible practices. And ultimately the mighty coating of ice which had imprisoned (and protected) Steggy all these years began slowly to melt. It took a million years or so to do so, but eventually—in the Fifteenth Century—it melted down to a mere glacier not much larger than the Himalayas.

And presently, one Thursday afternoon in mid-September, Twentieth Century, it burst. It was a big business, that burst, and nobody witnessed it. The only important living thing within hundreds of miles was Steggy; and he was busily occupied in trying to call to mind the exact place in which he had left a haunch of that Triceratops cub for a snack before settling down to the serious matter of finding breakfast.

It puzzled the old dinosaur very much to find that he had forgotten where he had buried that haunch—puzzled and annoyed him, for he was hungry. He racked his brains in vain to think of the place. This did not take him very long, for he was very short of brains. Most of the dinosaurs were. Steggy, for instance, was between twelve and fourteen feet high, but he had about as many brains as a newt.

And his lapse of memory was excusable, for certainly forty and probably many more millions of years had passed since the unfortunate creature had buried the haunch-bone

for which he now craved so passionately. He felt stiff, too, and a little chilly. After all, he had been preserved in ice for a long time. Also, he was feeling rather low in health, and his skin did not fit him very well. It felt baggy.

He stood in the hot sunshine listening to the water trickling off him as he thawed, and his digestive machinery shrieked for employment.

There came that way, mooning along in an absent-minded manner, a big grizzly bear, muttering to himself. He paid no attention whatever to Steggy. Probably he was laboring under the dangerous delusion that the dinosaur was a large chunk of rock. Indeed, there was no doubt that such was the case; for the big bear, either lazy or tired, and certainly unlucky, came up and lay down with a grunt of satisfaction between the two gigantic pillars which were the old dinosaur's forelegs.

Steg lifted a hindleg and put it abruptly down upon the bear, which went pop under the terrific weight of the stroke, and was transformed into breakfast for the dinosaur before it realized what had struck it.

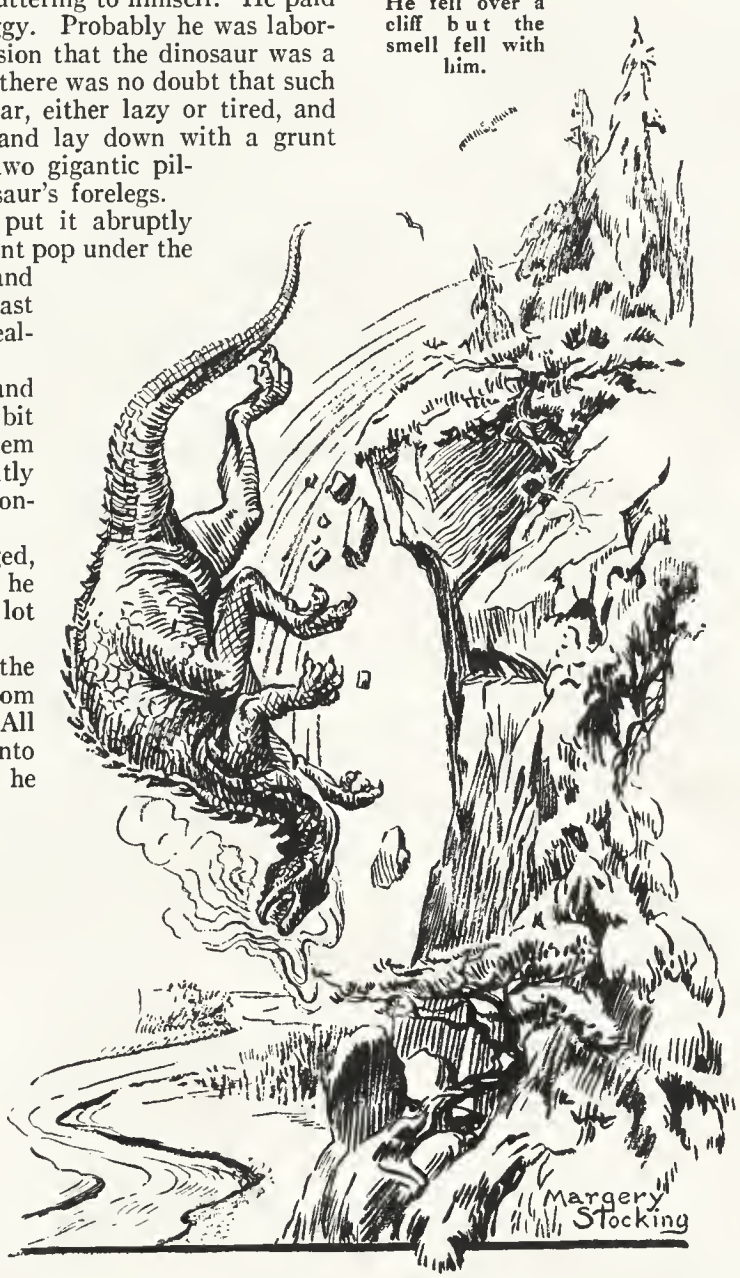
Steg swallowed the bear and felt momentarily stayed. He bit off a few trees and added them to the grizzly while he absently contemplated the scenery, wondering which way to go.

"Place seems to have changed, somehow, since last night," he grunted. "Funny. It's a lot warmer than it was, too."

He listened, and caught the sound of rushing water from somewhere not far ahead. All his arrears of thirst surged into his mind at the sound, and he lumbered forward at a slow clumsy gallop, creaking as he went, and shaking the earth like a howitzer.

He came almost at once upon a river where he drank himself three feet bigger round without once drawing breath.

Some minutes later, having taken aboard so many gallons of water that the writer, who has a reputation for adhering strictly to the truth, dares not mention the precise quantity, the dinosaur, feeling fairly fit again, headed south.



He fell over a cliff but the smell fell with him.

Steggy wanted warmth, and old-fashioned though his natural instinct was, it inspired him to go south. So in blind obedience to instinct he headed south, snapping up any odd trifles he came across—two bull moose, for instance, whom he found fighting, with their horns interlocked. The moose is an intelligent animal, courageous, swift and cunning. If either of the belligerents could have realized that Steg was a genuine dinosaur, it is quite possible that both moose might at this moment be roaming the wild free and happy. As it is, however, they went south with Steggy. So did a considerable number of young pine trees. The resinous flavor of these interested the poor out-of-date animal immensely, and he treated them much as we treat celery. A timber-merchant would have found him an expensive pet.

Bears pleased him, too, for they were fattening for their winter sleep. He developed a certain amount of skill in bear-catching. What none of the denizens of the Alaskan wilds ever seemed to understand was that the dinosaur, in spite of his mighty bulk, and his age—and it would be idle to deny that he was getting on in years—could spring like a hop-frog. This was due to the incredible strength of his unreasonably vast hindlegs. There was more than a touch of the kangaroo about Steg, as there had been about most of the Jurassic flocks and herds with which Steg had spent his youth.

It is undeniable that when Steg jumped, he came down heavily—rather like a locomotive falling into a chalk pit. But he usually got what he jumped for, though he generally mashed it into a pulp.

But in spite of his science and his instinctive knowledge of how to use his weight, the dinosaur had his failures. One of these occurred shortly after he left Alaskan territory. For some days flesh-food had been scarce. The news of Steg's arrival had circulated rather completely throughout the animal inhabitants of that region, with the result that Steg was given plenty of room in which to travel. There was never any overcrowding in Steggy's neighborhood now. So the dinosaur had got out of the way of invariably selecting large meals. He did not disdain plenty of small ones.

He was lumbering along one morning when he perceived standing some ten yards away a pretty little striped animal with a bushy tail which it carried erect like a cat's. It was a particularly virile and healthy skunk.

"It's small—but maybe it's tasty," thought the dinosaur, and leaped like an elephant with a charge of dynamite behind it.

It was not often that Steg missed what he jumped for. Nevertheless he missed that skunk. Probably it was because his instinct told him that he was engaging in a singularly doubtful enterprise, and accordingly he endeavored to stop himself in midair—in vain.

He came thundering to the ground, his queer-shaped head and face about a foot short of the thoroughly irritated skunk—who at once made its irritation manifest.

They had some tolerably vivid odors in the Jurassic age, and they were no slouches at perfumes in the Mesozoic. Steg had been born in one or other of these, and it may be

taken for granted that he was fairly well experienced in weird smells. But the little effort of this modern skunk would have made the best the Jurassic could furnish a pale, weak and colorless affair.

For one fleeting instant the dinosaur thought a mountain had fallen upon his head and face and flattened them; then he realized that it had not, but wished that it had. For he was the dead center—or at least the half-dead center—of a Cyclone of Smell.

He roared and moaned aloud; he whined like a wolf and barked like a dog; he neighed and snorted; he brayed like an ass and lowed plaintively like a cow. He gasped, crowed, blinked his eyes, shook his head, ground his teeth and wagged his tail. But it was all in vain. The smell clung to him closer than a brother.

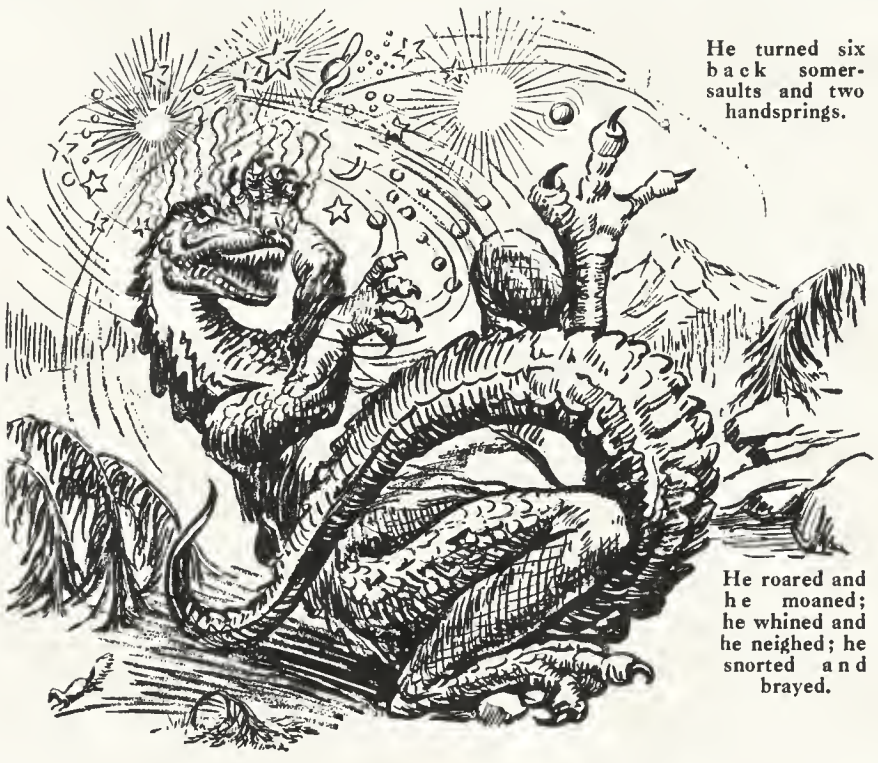
He leaped into the air, and turned six back somersaults and two handsprings; he buried his face in the grass, and the grass stopped growing; but the smell did not cease smelling. He sat up on his haunches and pawed at the air, gasping for breath. Strange colors floated before his eyes. He saw stars, comets, asteroids, moons, planets and suns—complete constellations, in fact, but they were all overpoweringly flavored with North American skunk.

He lost his temper and tore up the earth, forgot his anger, lay down on his side, put his feet on his face and cried like a child. But it did not abate the general skunkiness of things. So the dinosaur shut his eyes and set off at a wild gallop through the forest.

He cut a swath through the wood like a hurricane. Trees snapped off like carrots before his onset. But he noticed them no more than grass-stalks. He won clear of the woods and fell over a cliff. But the smell fell with him, and he continued his flight across a narrow sandy beach, finally finishing in about fourteen feet of ice-cold water.

He had blundered into a river, and here he found a slight relief. He remained in the water, soaking his face, for the rest of the day, a cowed and humble dinosaur.

When, at sunset, he emerged, dripping, it was with the unalterable determination never in any circumstances whatever, to interfere with any animal that was striped and wore a bushy tail. He was just able to endure himself when after an uneasy and nightmare-haunted doze he resumed his journey. But he remembered that skunk for the rest of his life.



He turned six back somersaults and two handsprings.

He roared and he moaned; he whined and he neighed; he snorted and brayed.

Weeks passed before Steg regained his power of scent sufficiently to distinguish anything from skunk—and by the time he did so, he had covered a vast distance.

He had started originally for somewhere in the region of the Esquimaux Lake and his route had led him past the Great Bear Lake, south to the Great Slave Lake down to Athabasca. He was now in a country where any day he might blunder upon man.

Indeed, he had once attracted the attention of a couple of Indian trappers—two of the Frostiface tribe. But with the intelligence for which these Indians are notorious, they did not interfere with him. He was too large a contract. Strictly speaking they did not take him seriously; for they encountered him on the morning after they had finished their last bottle of firewater in celebration of the birthday of one of them, and they attributed the appearance of Steg to the vagaries of the firewater.

Fortunately for those poor savages Steg did not notice them, and went lumbering away over a rise hot on the trail of a caribou bull which he had just struck.

The two Frostifaces had rather blearily watched him disappear. Then, glancing suspiciously at each other they said simultaneously, "Ugh! Heap bad medicine," and resumed their desultory vocations.

Neither believed that Steg was real—and so it befell that the honor of discovering the dinosaur fell to Mr. Angus M'Clump, of Icicle City, Saskatchewan. Icicle City was a collection of half a dozen log huts, five of which were uninhabited, their owners having evacuated them upon hearing from the railway company, in response to a petition signed by the whole population, that there was no immediate prospect of the company building a four-hundred-mile spur out to Icicle City for some time to come. So Mr. M'Clump had inherited the whole city. He dwelt in the largest of the cabins and used the others variously as store-sheds, fuel-supplies and so forth.

He was a grim old Scot of middle age, proof against all weathers and all whiskies. He was a very skillful trapper and was amassing a goodly pile of valuable furs. The appalling loneliness of his life did not disturb him, for he had a very good supply of whisky, a copy of the works of Robbie Burns, and an encyclopedia. He was a very level-headed man, and he was glad of this on the day that Steg, the dinosaur, came tottering feebly down the main street of Icicle City and collapsed with a deep groan on the very doorstep of Mr. M'Clump.

Angus was reading at the time. He had just come in from a three-day round of visiting a long line of traps, had eaten well, piled up a big fire, stimulated himself a little and had settled down to Robbie Burns when he heard the groan with which the suffering Steg announced his advent.

"Losh! But whut's wrang the noo?" said Mr. M'Clump in accents of surprise. He put down Robbie, slipped on his furs, for it was now December, took his rifle, for he was a methodical man, and stepped out of doors.

For a brief moment Mr. M'Clump thought he was seeing visions. Then, as Steg groaned feebly, he perceived that he had to deal with facts. "Ah, the puir wee beastie!" said Mr. M'Clump sympathetically.

For Steg was ill—obviously ill. Fresh from the Jurassic age, he had come up against difficulties and dangers which had not existed in the remote period in which he had been born.

Steg had courage and to spare. He did not fear any dinosaur that lived, though naturally there had been plenty he would not have gone out of his way to meet.

The colossal eighty-foot long Atlantosaurus could not strike terror into the heart of Steg; nor did he greatly fear the Brontosaurus in spite of that creature's sixty feet of solid bulk. The vast Cetiosaurus caused Steg no loss of slumber, and though he did not care much for a full-grown Triceratops (whose three-horned skull alone averaged eight feet long), nevertheless he did not abjectly fear one. The old dinosaur had a full knowledge of how to deal with these giants, had he encountered any; but strange though it may seem, he had no chance whatever with a modern complaint. The fact was that Steg was suffering from a bad touch of the colic, or in simpler, homelier words, he had the stomachache.

"It's small—but maybe it's tasty," thought the dinosaur—and leaped. But he missed.

Forty millions years ago stomachache was practically unknown—so that when it struck the unfortunate dinosaur a few days before he reached Icicle City, it struck him with the full force of a complete novelty, and crumpled him up rather thoroughly.

His figure, too, was a great handicap. Had he been shaped like a greyhound, which graceful animal does not appear to possess any stomach worth writing about, it might have gone more easily with him. But he was equipped with rather unusual prodigality in the matter of tummy, and consequently the colic had room in which to work. Steg, in short, was suffering from about forty cubic yards of stomachache, which is a great deal of stomachache to contend with in a cold country.

He lowed feebly at Mr. M'Clump, as the old Scot strolled right round him, in search of a probable cause of the gigantic animal's trouble.

"I dinna ken what's wrang wi' ye, laddie," said Mr. M'Clump. "I am not verra well acquent wi' the pains and perplexities o' such beasties as ye are. But I will mix ye a little prescription of my ain devisin'!"

He retired to his cabin and took a jar of rye whisky, strong enough to start hair sprouting upon the totally bald. He added to a gallon of this a half-gallon of practically boiling water, a tin of mustard, a pound of cayenne pepper and a generous touch of everything else he had which possessed heating properties. Then he poured the steaming mixture into a large pan and bore it out to the shivering dinosaur.

Steg inhaled the steam, and his dull eyes brightened a little. He raised his head and feebly lapped at the terrible hell-broth. Then he lapped less feebly, and even less so, until finally he finished the pan with enthusiasm. He lay still for a moment, reveling in the generous glow which swiftly traveled down into his interior and chased away the colic as a forest fire chases away snakes. Then suddenly he staggered to his feet and stood for a moment, recovering visibly, his eyes fixed on the interested M'Clump.

"Eh, laddie, but ye came to the richt mon to doctor ye," said Mr. M'Clump, proudly surveying the sudden perspiration which broke out on the vast hide of the big beast. "Ye should be oot o' the cold, though."

He reflected for a moment, then moved away toward a big hollow surrounded by a dense, heavily timbered thicket, now covered with a deep drift of snow. Steg followed him, a faint sense of gratitude, and a vague hope that there might be some more of that warming invigorating broth, growing slowly in his heart. Under the guidance of the acute Scot the old dinosaur blundered deep into the big drift and there lay down and dozed off into a healthy sleep.

For some time Mr. M'Clump stood admiring him and ransacking his mind in an effort to classify him.

"Ye are no' a hippopotamus, and ye are no' a rhinoceros, baith o' which are wee timorous beasties compared with ye," he muttered. "Ye are no an elephant nor a mammoth, for ye would mak either o' them look like sma' heifers beside ye."

Dim recollections of long-forgotten picture-books came back into the old trapper's mind.

"Ye must be a—a deenosaurus. I will look ye up in the encyclopedia. Whatever ye are, ye are certainly a verra valuable piece o' property—and it would be canny to brand ye richt awa'."

Mr. M'Clump was a Scot, and that is tantamount to saying that he feared nothing on earth. He decided to brand Steggy without loss of time—while he was weak.

Among the few souvenirs he had brought away from Texas (where some years before he had gracefully failed as a rancher), was a "Triangle Dot Cross L" branding-iron. All property found with that weird symbol scarred in upon its hide might safely be regarded as the property of Mr. Angus M'Clump.

He hurried indoors and stuck the iron in the stove. It was weeks since he had seen a human being, but he was a cautious man, and being fully alive to the value of Steg, was in a frenzy of haste to get the poor colic-stricken survival of the Jurassic well and truly hall-marked before anyone else arrived.

A few minutes later he cantered across the snow to the sleeping monster, the white-hot iron at the ready.

He pressed it hard on the haunch which was nearest him. Instantly there arose a cloud of smoke and a very horrid odor of burning horn. But Steg took no notice. He had a skin at least eighteen inches thick, and long before the slight pain filtered down to his nerves, Mr. M'Clump had Triangle-Dot-Cross-L'd him in three more places, and was on the point of leaving him. He was just indulging in one last fond look at the mighty serrated back of his new acquisition when he heard a dry cough behind him. He turned like lightning, to gaze into the eye of a heavy repeating rifle which was held very steadily pointing at his heart by a short, fattish man dressed like a trapper, with a hard eye and a highly discontented expression.

"Put up your hands, you gol-derned cattle-rustler!" commanded the man with the rifle. "Up with them hooks, or I shore lets lead through you!"

Mr. M'Clump raised his heavy hands.

"Which you are took in the very act of the deed," observed the fat man. "And tharfore you have shore merited sudden destruction."

"What act? What deed?" demanded Mr. M'Clump furiously.

"The low-down ornery act of rustlin' that there maverick of mine," said the fat man.

"*Yours!*" said Mr. M'Clump incredulously.

"Stampeded off my location two months ago," said the fat man, "which I've been trailing the same ever since."

He was quite obviously lying, and M'Clump knew it. But in those regions it is considered the height of stupidity to suggest that a man with a large rifle trained on one's breast-bone is a liar. So the Scot temporized.

"Where is your location?" he asked mildly.

"Up thar!" The man jerked his head toward the north.

"Do ye raise these beasties there, mon?"

"Thousands of 'em," said the man.

"Aye? An' what manner o' name have ye for sic beasties?" continued Mr. M'Clump.

The other hesitated—but only for a moment.

"Alaskan sawbacks," he said. "I raise 'em for export."

M'Clump shook his head sadly, forgetting his native caution.

"Losh, mon! But ye're a poor, daft liar!" he said. "Yon's a deenosaurus! I lookit him up in the encyclopedia while I was heatin' my brandin'-iron!"

"A what?" asked the other.

"A deenosaurus! He belongs to the Jurassic."

"Belongs to who?" asked the trapper, prepared to defend his quite unfounded claim.

"The Jurassic age. He is a survivor from the great Mesozoic epoch," explained Mr. M'Clump, quoting freely from his encyclopedia.

"Say, pard, who be them gents, anyway? Injuns?" inquired the stranger, looking a little dazed.

He lowered his rifle.

"I yields to superior education—and I throws in my hand, accordin' tharunto," he continued with a sigh. "I was minded to raise your bet on deenosaurus, stranger, and I thought you was jest plain bluffin' on Jewrasstic! But you got all the kyards in the pack. I resigns to you, and the chips is yourn!" He smiled sadly, his whole manner oddly softened. Then he burst out suddenly:

"But say, friend, what in hell is thisyere beast, anyway? I run against his tracks in the snow two days ago, and I thought I was seeing hallubrications! I've spent most of my life down on the plains, and this is my fust year up yere sence I was a ornery little runt two foot high. He looked valuable, and I jest naturally claimed him, which same claim I now hastens to withdraw."

Mr. M'Clump warmed to the man for his frank confession, and became hospitable at once. The stranger's reference to him as a man of superior education had pleased him immensely.

"Mon," he said, "it's a black and profound mystery to me how yon beastie arrived in the Twentieth Century. He's no less than forty millions of years old an' maybe more! Deenosaurs have been extinctit these millions o' years. I tell ye, I found him lyin' on my threshold—like a foundling, mon—sore stricken wi' the bellyache. An' he's mine."

"Which same is shorely true, pard," commented the other, who had said his name was Lariat Smith. "And now yeh've roped and branded him, what is your next idees?"

"I'll advertise him for sale. There's many a millionaire would pay a fair price for him, d'ye ken?"

Lariat Smith stared admiringly at Mr. M'Clump.

"I said yeh was a man o' superior education, which same I am free to maintain with hot lead against all comers," he said with a sigh, and reached for the whisky.

Steg awoke next morning feeling like a three-year-old. Gone was that strange colossal pain, and in its place was a voluptuous warmth. Small-brained though the big dinosaur was, he nevertheless recognized Mr. M'Clump as his preserver and benefactor, and when, not without caution, the Scot approached him next morning, he fawned upon the old man like a dog. M'Clump fondled his head a little, and when the dinosaur reached out to gather in Lariat Smith, as he had been wont to gather in bears, a sharp word and a quick pat on the head with a rifle-butt from M'Clump conveyed to the gigantic beast the knowledge that Lariat was to be exempt from his appetite.

So he quietly began to browse on the pine trees, which were plentiful enough in that neighborhood to keep half a dozen dinosaurs for a week.

That afternoon Lariat Smith left Icicle City *en route* for civilization. He and Mr. M'Clump had come to a mutually satisfactory arrangement, and he was now bound for a place where he could issue an announcement to the world in general and millionaires in particular. Mr. M'Clump was to follow quietly on with the dinosaur.

Long before the approach of the Scot and Steg to the nearest town was signaled, so to speak, the world had read and grasped the significance of the announcement, reproduced above, which was displayed strikingly in every newspaper in the hemisphere.

FOR SALE!

ONE MALE DINOSAUR

GENUINE SAWBACKED STEGOSAURUS

(The last of the pedigree herd of Angus M'Clump, Esq., the celebrated breeder, retiring from business.)

This fine, upstanding, very stanch Dinosaur (answering to the name of Steg) standing 14 feet high, rising forty million years old, warranted gentle and kind to ride and drive, free from blemish and in perfect condition, will be sold by public auction by—

MR. LARIAT SMITH

At

THE DOMINION HOTEL,

WINNIPEG,

on

JANUARY 18th NEXT

Sale To Commence At 12 A. M. Sharp

This incredible announcement was accompanied by a picture made from an enlargement of a snapshot taken with M'Clump's pocket camera.

After the first gasp of amazement the scientists, museums, wild-beast emporiums, zoos, fairs, menageries and private speculators throughout the world settled down to compete. Mr. Lariat Smith took an office in Winnipeg and attended to his correspondence, having hired a temporarily stranded fiction-writer to supply the numerous reporters with facts.

Offers poured in.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were offered, rapidly rising to millions; and francs, marks, rubles and yens were offered in amazing quantities. A famous comedian offered a half-million pounds sterling; the Umpteenth Battalion of the Welsh Fusiliers volunteered to accept Steg as a mascot. It was rumored that the British museum was contemplating making a firm offer of thirty pounds cash, but this was subsequently denied.

He lapped feebly at the terrible hell-broth.
"Eh, laddie, but ye came to the richt mon to doctor ye," said Mr. M'Clump.

Long before the sale, however, the matter had risen into a region whither few could follow it—namely the region of American millionairedom.

For a time the figure danced upwards from one million dollars to ten million—but as all the world knew, that figure was meaningless. The whole thing now resolved itself into a very simple problem—viz: which of four people wanted to be the owner of the only thing of its kind in the world, for there were only four people rich enough to buy it. These were Mr. Johan D. Rockcellar, Mr. Henri Fourd, a certain celebrated meat-packer, and a skillfully unknown English coal-owner. The meat-packer stopped at twenty million. Mr. Fourd's last offer was thirty million. It lay between Johan and the English coal-owner.

Not till the day before the sale did Johan make any movement. Then he made the telegraph wires white-hot with a curt offer of fifty million dollars F.O.B.

Lariat Smith opened and read the message and turned to the representative of the British coal-owner, a gentleman named Isidor Moss-Gordon, and said briefly:

"Johan says fifty million. What about it?"

Mr. Moss-Gordon turned pale.

"Sixty million dollars is my last word," he replied.

Lariat nodded, and picked up the telephone, into which he uttered a few cryptic words.

"I'm getting through to Mr. Rockcellar," he said.

Swiftly came Johan's last word—seventy million dollars for the dinosaur.

Mr. Moss-Gordon waved his hands feebly.

"Let him have the brute," he said. "But if it hadn't been for the Excess Profits Tax—" he began darkly, broke off, took his hat and went away.

With a sigh of content, Lariat Smith settled down to await the arrival of Mr. M'Clump and Steg.

Late that night Lariat Smith was sitting in his office dreamily working out schemes for best investing his share of the profits, when the door opened and Mr. Angus M'Clump strode in.

"Hello, pard!" said Lariat delightedly.

Mr. M'Clump's only reply was to utter a most unmelodious groan and several dry sobs.

"Say, what's the matter, pard?" asked Lariat Smith.

"Aye, mon, it's a disastrous story," moaned Mr. M'Clump. "And I tell it to ye in few wairds! Mon, yon wee dinosaur is no more."

Lariat Smith leaped up. "D'ye mean he's dead?"

"Oh, aye!" said Angus. "He's turned into a fossil."

"Helendamnation!" was Mr. Smith's sole comment. "And I've just sold him to Johan Rockcellar for seventy million dollars!" He lost consciousness. Mr. M'Clump had already fainted. . . .

Exactly how or why it had happened, nobody knew—but it had come about quite simply: Mr. M'Clump had been at the very point of starting away from Icicle City with Steg, who, still a willing slave to his own gratitude, seemed as fit as a fiddle and fresh as a kitten. Mr. M'Clump had just turned to lock the door of his cabin when he heard a very peculiar sound behind him.

He turned sharply, only to discover that the dinosaur had stopped, apparently frozen into a strange immobility.

Mr. M'Clump proceeded to examine the dinosaur closely, first with his hands, then with a hammer, and finally with an ax. But his investigations worked out exactly the same every time: *Steg had turned to stone.*

What strange freak of nature had caused this, it is impossible to say. But though the cause was and ever will be obscure, the effect was obvious—in solid stone.

There he was out there in the Saskatchewan snow—a perfect and complete fossil of a genuine Stegosaurus, looking as though he might have been dead forty million years—exactly as he should have been. And all around him in the snow were the tracks he himself had made in getting to the position in which he was now a fixture. Dark and inscrutable are the ways of fate in even the simplest of her operations. . . .

Messrs. M'Clump and Smith came to their senses simultaneously, and staring at each other, they whizzed their hands around to their hip pockets—each withdrawing a big pocket flask, in search of moral support. Mournfully they drank a long farewell to the millions they would never have; and then, after a brief and hurried conversation, they arose and faded silently out of Winnipeg, *en route* to Icicle City, there to build a high fence round the stony Steg until such time as they could sell him to a museum or a collector of statuary.

Two months later they got a hundred thousand dollars for him from Mr. Rockstone Shelley-Chalk, the famous fossil-sharp of Wyoming—which, as Lariat Smith very truly said, was "shore some clean-up, anyhow."

The Mud Gang

A writer new to these pages here contributes a not-soon-forgotten story of men on the job.

By FRANK KNOX HOCKMAN

Illustrated by Harold Bryant

SOMEWHERE in the world there may be better concrete men than Piotr Vlanich, but I doubt it. Product of the days when the hand hoe and the "mud trough" were still in use, Piotr made concrete of an indefinable quality that bespoke the master who loved his work. From the moment the big drum of the mixer began to churn its Titan's batter, the Russian was in his element. Under his watchful eye, twenty batches an hour shot steadily from the spout and were properly distributed and efficiently "worked" by the spaders and tampers at the ends of the long chutes. There was never any honeycomb or water-work in Piotr's concrete—which made for a satisfied crew of inspectors, held costs to a minimum, and insured a sound thirty-day pre-estimate on progress.

Piotr looked like concrete—untroweled concrete, with rough form marks on the surface. From the top of his clipped, mud-colored hair to the toes of his Size Fourteen brogues, he was solid, blocky and strong. With his hairy, gorillalike arms and the ugliest face I ever saw, he reminded me of primal creations. At some time in the past he had worked as a "shooter" in a rock quarry, and the premature explosion of a charged hole had done things to his face. A deep, ragged scar drew the corners of his right eye and his mouth toward each other; he was badly pitted from smallpox; and his leathery cheeks, where they were not pockmarked, were plentifully tattooed with powder-spots. Also, he wore mustaches—outlandish mustaches that flared upward toward his keen eyes and plumed out at the ends like tails. I never saw anyone try to get personal with Piotr, except horses, dogs, very small children—and Reb Gatlin.

Socially, the big "Russky's" appearance might have been a handicap, but it was a decided asset from an industrial point of view. In a crew presided over by such a figure, mutiny was hard to stir up, and job agitation hard to accomplish. This was made doubly so by Piotr's linguistic abilities; he could speak six of the European languages fluently, swear in fifteen, and fight in anything from Sanskrit to Esperanto. And how he loved a good clean fight! Many times I've seen him jump into the air like a rock leaping, crack his heels together, and dive at Reb Gatlin—the only man he couldn't lick—just for the joy of encounter. And just as often, I've seen him pick himself up a minute later, grin widely, and rub a hairy paw over a bruised cheek or a bleeding nose.

"Dot's *dobrey!*" he'd grunt approvingly, and waddle off about his business, leaving Reb to dust his hands together in a characteristically humorous gesture.

Reb was a giant—a rangy giant. He compared with Piotr as tool-steel compares with granite. Long and lean of frame, with ropelike muscles that gave his body the springy grace of a panther, he was all virility. His mouth, with its long upper lip, was wide and humorous. His gray-blue eyes were clear and alive. The battered felt hat cocked with a bellicose air on the side of his carroty red head marked him somehow, as a natural leader among that hard-boiled brotherhood—the steel men.

When I met these two I had just returned from a railroad job in Asia Minor. Old Gregory Bryson, president of the Mammoth Construction Corporation, was giving me new instructions.

"Milt," he said, "there's the very devil to pay on the Bitter River bridge job. The darn' thing must be jinxed. Go on out there and take 'er over. In order to give you a break in straightening things out, I've already wired the present superintendent to report here at the office next Monday, and to bring his steel foreman, labor foreman, and office-manager with him. I've picked two other foremen for you, and another office-man. Drop in here at five o'clock for your expense-account. The foremen will be waiting here, and I'll meet you at the station, at six-thirty, with the new office-man."

Just like that! And my fond hopes of a month's well-earned vacation were instantaneously knocked flat.

At five o'clock when I stepped into the cashier's office for my traveling-voucher, I saw two men seated in the outer office and knew them at once for just who they were. There was no question about it; they impacted!

For the trip, Piotr was wearing a bright blue suit with rows of pearl buttons on cuffs and pocket flaps, a startling yellow-and-red necktie, a pair of buttoned yellow shoes that must have been designed by a furniture maker; the whole regalia was topped off by a green fedora hat a full size too small for his head. Reb wore the steel man's ubiquitous blue serge suit, soft flannel shirt, and one-ounce black felt hat.

It took the three of us only a few minutes to size each other up, and we soon arrived at a satisfactory Reb-Pete-Milt stage of acquaintanceship. Later, while we waited at the station, Reb seemed to notice Piotr's gorgeous array for the first time.

"My Gawd!" he marveled, leaning back and surveying the resplendent Russian. "Aint you grand! But, man dear, we're goin' out there t' build a bridge, not t' give a circus!"

"Dot's *dobrey* by me," Piotr answered complacently. "I build 'im, like all de time. You choost stay out from de road an' vatch. *Phew!* Dot shoe mus' have turnbuckle inside. I feex, by tam!" Bending over, he removed his one bright shoe, and sat wiggling his toes inside a red sock, then leaned back with a sigh of utter content, unconcerned with the laughing people about him.

Old Gregory, when he arrived, grinned his appreciation of Piotr's outfit and shoeless comfort. He brought with him a little self-important man named Simon Tow, whom I had often seen around the main office. Tow, it turned out, was my promised office-man. He had a pouty little mouth in a fat little face, from which two little eyes looked out through gold-rimmed spectacles. Little—that's the adjective that describes Tow's appearance. His inner quality was little, too; even as he was introduced to me, his face wore a look of disgust for the contented Piotr, and before we had entered the Pullman for our three-day trip, his littleness showed again.

"We aren't going to make the journey in company with that swine, I hope," he said casting a disdainful glance at Piotr. I assured him that we were. "Then let us have our section together," he suggested. "You and I can hardly be expected to associate with that Hunky. Gatlin, of course, is used to him."

"Reb and I expect to spend the trip going over the steel plans," I told him, "so he and I will have a section together. You and Piotr will have the section opposite. Explain your system of timekeeping and ordering to the big fellow. He needs it."

One of his great arms flashed out and warded off the slashing blow of a concrete spade that had been aimed at Tow's head.

Tow ungracefully accepted the inevitable and assumed a petty, snobbish attitude toward Piotr. But Piotr was competent to manage. The first night, Tow having appropriated the lower berth, he was promptly dragged therefrom, in his pink pajamas, and tossed into the upper by the big Russian—to Simon's deep embarrassment and to the delight of our fellow travelers.

We all ate together. Piotr consumed prodigious quantities of food, on which he liked to scatter pepper lavishly. The evening of the second day, at dinner, he inhaled with gusto the savory steam rising from a double order of hashed brown potatoes that he and Simon Tow had ordered between them. Then he extracted a head of garlic from his pocket, flipped off the husks with a grimy thumbnail, and chopped the smelly stuff over the appetizing dish. Tow went sulky under the vulgarity of the proceeding, and the situation was saved only by Reb, who passed his order of potatoes to Tow and helped Piotr dispose of the odoriferous dish.

THE situation worried Reb. "Milt," he declared later, in the smoking-room, "that Tow insect just won't fit. Better pass him up, hadn't you? If Pete ever happens to get sore when the runt has one of his sulky spells on, God pity the runt! I'm tellin' you, Milt, that Russky don't fool when he gets on the prod."

"Forget it," I advised. "The big boss put Tow on with us, and he'll stay until something besides his social atti-

tude dictates a change. It'll all work out smooth when we hit the job." I hoped it would—for on the job I expected, with reason, that Piotr and Tow would find that coördination of effort which would dwarf petty things.

From the four quarters of the globe men would be gathered at the Bitter River bridge job—sand-hogs, shovel-stiffs, form-builders, steel-workers, mud-gangs, and engineers. From other jobs, where the snort of excavating machinery, the staccato bark of riveting hammers, and the whine of hard-driven spikes had ceased, they would have come—a fighting, sweating, hard-boiled hodgepodge of humanity, to sacrifice with the loyalty and fervor of bigots at this new shrine of industrial progress. With all feuds and trade antipathies laid aside in the common cause, they would either unite in a driving force of high accomplishment, if properly managed—or become an unorganized mob of inefficients, if not properly led.

Within two days of our arrival at the Bitter River job I was glad that I had decided in favor of Tow, for the little man had his points. He took hold of a demoralized office force in a fussily capable manner and whipped it into shape with lightning speed. His shrill, whiny voice nagged his assistants until sometimes, in sheer desperation, I had to get out of my own cubbyhole adjoining the main office. But Tow got results. I believed that, once interested in the work, he would learn to appreciate Piotr as he deserved. In this, however, I was a trifle too optimistic. A week after our arrival on the job, Tow came into my office with a complaint.

"Mr. Lethridge," he pouted, "something will have to be done about that Hunky labor foreman. I can scarcely decipher his writing on orders for material, and his attitude in the office is disruptive of discipline. Surely some one at least partly human could be found for a labor foreman."

"Possibly," I agreed. "Yourself, for instance. But what we need first in a labor foreman, Tow, is not good manners. We need a man-handler, and Pete is all of that. It's your job to interpret his orders for materials. If, at any time, you can't do it, bring the order to me, and I'll read it for you. Cut away from this fault-finding, Tow! That's the only thing wrong with this job now—internal strife. I won't stand much more of it."

TOW returned to his work, while I swung around in my chair and stared out over the job, considering the ridiculous littleness of human beings. How could men be so small of head and heart as to let petty dislikes interfere with the progress of such a project! The Bitter River bridge had all the earmarks of a construction-man's paradise.

Rugged and raw in the morning sunshine, the partially completed job stood out against a background of surrounding hills and sky and sky-reflecting water. From either shore of the river gaunt skeletons of steel reared a hundred feet into the air. These were the cableway masts. Over the cable connecting their tops would be carried the concrete for the great central pier which was to rise out of the stream. On the near bank, at the base of the tower, was the mixing plant, where all the concrete for the job would be prepared. Near the top of this tower a giant steel hopper had been fixed, and from the bottom of the hopper a series of steel chutes ran in a line—ten of them, each twenty feet long—through which the concrete for the near abutment was spouted. A steel boom one hundred and twenty feet long controlled these chutes, to distribute the concrete evenly over the section enclosed by heavily timbered and shored forms.

As I looked, the abutment was receiving a "lift" pour. The roar and bark of the mixer engine, the rumble and groan of the big drum, the explosive exhaust of the hoisting engine running the concrete bucket to the tower top or swinging the boom, the clatter of wheelbarrows shooting their loads from the vast piles of stone and sand into the steel skip, the rattle and thump of carpenters' hammers on the sides of the forms, the thudding bump of a pile-driver working on the far shore—all these created a rhythm of synchronized endeavor that would end in a form of massive beauty to stand and vindicate the toil necessary for its creation, and to justify again the great freemasonry of the men who build.

I saw Piotr come from the enclosed mixer-house, his body covered with a film of gray cement dust. He walked to the edge of the forms, where Reb directed the labors of the steel gang placing the reinforcing steel. There the two men stood, heads back, prefiguring the finished structure that would mark the completion of just another job, but exemplifying in their attitudes the spirit of the builders' clan—pioneers in the van of progress.

I turned from the scene of immensity without, back to the monotonous routine of checking strains and stresses—back to the shrill whine of Tow's voice upbraiding a pasty-faced clerk for some old oversight; back to the atmosphere of drudgery behind all the activity in the open air; and my heart was heavy within me, for the Bitter River job was "wrong" some place.

FOR the next two weeks we fought along against a chain of unfortunate occurrences. A careless workman almost killed Piotr when he dropped a wrench from the tower top. It looked accidental. The ton skip of the mixer just missed catching the Russian when the mixer operator unaccountably dropped it back to the floor before its full load was discharged into the drum—another apparent accident. But when a big Swede swung a sack of cement from the top of a pile straight for Piotr's unprotected back, the accidental theory was no longer tenable. It was all Piotr. Every day developed some new menace, and the big Russian's eyes began to sink with the strain of it. Yet Piotr was splendid—hideous, magnificent, capable, faithful.

Nothing so graphically indicates Piotr's stanch dependability as his method of caring for the concrete chutes. Every evening when the day's pour ended, several barrels of water were run through the mixer to wash it thoroughly. This water was then dumped into the hoisting bucket, run up the mast, and shot through the deflected chute system. But at the hopper outlet, along the chute rims, and at the joint connections, great balls of concrete always formed and stuck fast, resisting the wash. These were permitted to set until the following morning, when, before the day's pour started, Piotr would crawl out on the dizzy chutes, a hundred feet in air, and with a ten-pound sledge knock loose the dry mass left from the previous day's pour. At the same time he inspected all joints and fastenings.

Perched out there on the swaying steel chutes—light when empty and held only by a single whip at the end of the long boom—Piotr's life depended on his steadiness and on the reliability of the engineer at the throttle, far below. And the abnormal condition of affairs existing on the job is best shown by the fact that Reb Gatlin would permit no one but himself to handle the engine when Piotr made his "cat-walk." The routine was always the same. An hour before the crews arrived—even before daylight on those early spring mornings—the pair went to the tower. Reb hoisted Piotr, in the concrete bucket, to the tower top. The bucket was then dropped back into place and Reb grasped the throttle and control lever of the engine. Slowly he straightened the chutes out to a gentle slope,

and Piotr's work with the sledge began. As soon as the inspection was completed, Reb nosed the end of the chute to the ground, and Piotr stepped off. The pair then started the mixer, ran a few barrels of water through the mixer and chutes, to "grease" them for the day's work and to remove any débris left by Piotr's sledge, and the plant was ready to begin operation.

A dangerous business, that chute-walking. A single snapped bolt at any junction might mean the sagging of a section under the Russian's weight, a sagging that would shift all strains, and perhaps drop the big fellow a sheer hundred feet. It spoke volumes for the character of Piotr that he chose to do the job himself, instead of delegating it to some one else. And it demonstrated the bond between Piotr and Reb. The first section of chute could not be seen by the man at the engine, and Piotr used the signal-cord, running from the platform beside the hopper to a gong above the engine, to let Reb know when the chute next the hopper was tautened to suit him. At a single pull on the cord, Reb "dogged" the boom and waited, load-line control in hand, until Piotr came into his range of vision on the second section of the chutes. Then Reb raised or lowered according to the hand-signal given by the big Russian.

"Here!" Piotr growled. "You tam quick fix oop dot pay for dis t'ree men!"

It wasn't long before complaints about the big fellow began to come to my office. One laborer displayed a black eye to substantiate his claim that the foreman was a brutal driver; another opened his dirty mouth and showed a gap from which Piotr had knocked five teeth; still another, somewhat shamefacedly, hobbled into the office for his time after Piotr had spanked him savagely with the flat of a Number Two shovel.

Taking it all in all, I made up my mind that the Russian was the peg on which the job's difficulty hung, and I decided to send him away just as soon as another foreman could be secured. By so doing, I figured, I would not only save the job, but I'd save Piotr's life, as well. For the accidents continued to happen. So I called Piotr and Reb into the office one afternoon and told them of my intention. Reb's face went white with anger as I broke my news, and I never felt so sorry for any man in my life as I did for the big Russian. He almost cried.

"Me, I no *kapish*," he mumbled. "Dot labor gank iss goot man, but dey got jinx. Can't be all my fault, 'cause dis chob was bad before I coom. But—I dunno," he said wearily: "I guess—I guess mebby if I'm hurtin' chob I better leave."

"Damn it, Milt," Reb exclaimed, "this aint fair! Pete's doin' his best, and his best is better than any other man can do with a labor gang. Send him away and the gang will get even worse. No foreman can handle 'em if they figure they can freeze him out."

"I know that," I agreed, "and it isn't that I expect to get a better labor foreman, or one half as good. But Pete's too good a man for one of these yellow rats to kill."

At this, Piotr jumped to his feet with a great laugh of recovered buoyancy. His ugly face was shining.

"Ho!" he rumbled. "You no scare about dot, Milt! Purty quick now, ve mebby find dot nigger inside voodpile dot make all dis trouble. Huh! Vot ve got? Ve got Syrian. Ve got Hoonkey. Ve got Toork. Ve got Greek. Ve got Dago. Me, I'm Russky. I lick six, eight, 'leven of dot odder boonch. You vatch, Milt—purty soon ve find dot trouble-cooker."

And we let it go at that. But day by day the tension on the job increased, and I was almost at my wits' end when an incident occurred that shed some light on causes.

None of the men knew I was in my small room when, several days after Piotr, Reb and I had had our conversation, the big foreman kicked open the swinging gate that barred his entrance into the office proper, strode over to Tow, slammed his fist on the little man's desk, and cut loose.

"Here!" he growled. "You tam quick fix oop dot pay for dis t'ree men. Pete Dudac, he short dollar t'irty. Steve Barko short two dollar ten. An' Mike Razzi short dollar sixty. You t'ink you make fool from Piotr, eh? Man coom ask about. You say to him, 'Damn' Hoonkey boss no can keep time.' Blame mistake on me, eh? Shut oop! You do him plenty time. Finish! No more!" There came a flurry from the outer office, the rumpled thump of a spinning body stopped by the partition, and once more Piotr's voice rumbled on. "Better no more of you pen-pooshers try somet'ing. Sit down, by tam, or I fix!" Again came a quick struggle, and a squeal from Tow. Then, "Dot's *dobrey*. Now, take him out from pocket dot fi' dollar. I bet you, by tam, you knock dot money down if man no kick about. Here! Gimme dot time-sheet. I check him wit' my book. *Scoro!* Quick! There, by tam! Now what you say, eh? Time-sheet check

wit' book! Got right dollar an' right cent for them men, too. Now listen! You better mebby make no more mistakes like dot time, yoong feller, or I make concrete out from you. *Kapish?*"

Came the heavy thudding of the Russian's feet as he started to leave the office. Tow's chair scraped as he swung around sharply. Then came a tinkling crash, and a deep chuckle from Piotr. Again his heavy stride crossed the office, and after a quick struggle, accompanied by considerable wheezing and choking, he laughed throatily.

"You t'row ink-bottle at Piotr, eh?" he asked. "Dot's *dobrey*. How you like dot ink for drink, eh? Taste goot? Ho! Nex' time I coom by dis office, you say, 'How d'you do, Mr. Vlanich, sir?'—or I give you more ink for drink. *Kapish?* You hear me? I say, do you *kapish?* By tam, do I gotta spank? Answer! *Kapish?*"

"Yes, I understand," Tow mumbled.

"All right. Now say it. Den mebby you not forget. Say it!"

"'How d'you do, Mr. Vlanich.'"

"'*Sir!*' Say it, by tam!"

"'How d'you do, Mr. Vlanich, sir.'"

Maybe I should have interfered in the matter, but Piotr seemed to have the situation well in hand, so waiting until quiet had once more been restored to the outer office, I called Tow, and was scarcely able to restrain my laughter when the ink-smeared little man made his appearance.

But I was angry, too. In no other way can dissatisfaction and contention be so quickly bred in an organization as through errors in pay-envelopes. And in no way can the power and influence of a foreman be so quickly undermined as by making his men believe that, through his fault, they are short in their pay. According to what Piotr had said, the condition had been going on for some time, and Tow had not attempted to deny it. Here was an unendurable source of trouble. I determined to act definitely. So—

"Tow," I announced bluntly, "you're done. I heard the fracas you just had with Piotr. You were either trying to crook the pay-roll or to breed trouble for the labor foreman. Your attitude toward Piotr has finally shown me why this job didn't improve when we took it over. A week from this coming Saturday I'll have another man here to take your place. That's all."

A half-insane look flashed up into the man's eyes as he left my office; it was only after I got out in the open air that I was able to forget the menace of that look.

Piotr's leg pulled from its hold, and the two men hung supported only by the grasp of the Russian's left hand.

I had fallen into the habit of catching Piotr and Reb at the tower every morning, for a few minutes' talk on the day's program, and on the third morning after I had notified Tow of his pending replacement I met the pair on their early way to the plant. Rain was beating down in squalls under a blustering wind. As the three of us stepped into the enclosed mixer-house at the foot of the tower, the whine of wind-tested chute joints came from the darkness overhead, and the lashing patter of rain-gusts played on the sheet-metal sides and roof. Presently Piotr climbed into the steel bucket, and Reb started the engine.

"Switch on the flood-light outside, will you, Milt?" Reb called. "It's so dark overhead I can't see to get the chutes in line."

The flood-light was anchored to a post some fifty feet from the base of the tower but higher up on the river bank, to flood the entire job with light in case night work should become necessary. I crossed to this light, and just as Piotr stepped from the bucket to the platform beside the hopper, I switched on the "flood."

Then I jumped behind it and looked up, startled by a faint and unintelligible shout from Piotr on the wind-lashed mast-head. I saw him give a quick jerk at the signal-cord, then cast it from him. It had been severed, ten feet below the platform. At that, I started running full tilt for Reb, who, deafened by the roar of the hoisting engine, and unable to see the mast-head from his position, had already dropped the bucket back to its resting-place at the mixer-spout, and was slowly "booming out" to straighten the chutes for Piotr.

That one upward glance of mine had been ominously revealing. The chute section next to the hopper was loose on one side, and that side had canted down to an angle of thirty degrees, leaving the entire strain of the two hundred feet of chutes and the boom pull hanging on the single bolt that still held on the other side. This alone was sufficient to drive me in frantic haste for Reb. But prone on the overturned section next to the hopper lay Tow, the look of a cornered animal struggling with one of abject fear, on his white face. His arms were wrapped tightly around the chute, and dangling from his right wrist by a leather thong hung an ordinary rigger's wrench.

The picture was brutally revealing and the reason for Tow's predicament was crystal-clear. Hatred for the big foreman had driven the little man to the top of the tower, inspired him to cut the signal-cord, and nerved him to crawl out on the swaying chutes to loosen the bolt that would spell death to Piotr when the boom pull came on

the chutes. But a gust of wind had been Tow's undoing, and now he clung to the gradually tautening chute, snared in his own trap.

My judgment on his murderous act had been instantaneous and pitiless. The boom pull would undoubtedly rip loose the other side of the chute. Tow's strength would be insufficient to hold on, in the wild sweep that would follow. His death was certain.

"So be it!" I said to myself.

But Piotr thought differently. The main spur to my flying legs had been the sight of the big Russian stepping out on the chute toward Tow, into danger equally great.

As I burst through the door of the engine shack I heard, above, the protesting shriek of rending steel. The single bolt was tearing loose, I knew. Piotr had only one chance. If the boom was high enough for the chute end to clear the ground in its drop, his mighty muscles might enable him to hold on in the breath-taking swoop that would follow. A chance—the only one! With that finality in mind, I shouted my loudest to attract Reb's attention, extended my hand, thumb up, and swept it in a wide arc to the right—the signal to "boom up and to the right." My face must have expressed desperate need, for the cables literally sang as Reb hastened to obey the sign.

I dashed out of the shack.

Through the bright illumination from the flood-light, and through slanted squalls of shining rain, the loose end of the long chute came sweeping to earth in a titanic arc that had a hundred-foot radius. Would it clear the ground? I held my breath, and tiny icicles seemed breaking inside my collar as a crash appeared imminent. But it cleared—just cleared. So close was the crash, a little spurt of mud shot into the air as the end scraped the ground. Then up—up—up the chute hurtled, out over the partly poured abutment, from which a forest of reinforcing bars reared sharp ends into the wind. Up—to the peak of its reverse arc the chute end rushed, and as it hung there momentarily, before starting its return swing, I got a quick glimpse of the two main actors in the drama.

Piotr's teeth, clenched tightly, showed in a white line through his drawn lips. One of his legs was locked in a cross band of the chute; his left hand held fast to another, and dangling from his right hand, kicking and struggling in frantic fear of death, hung Tow. The big Russian was shaking him savagely—as a terrier shakes a rat.

Then back came the chutes—back and down—back over the menacing steel rods, and, pendulum-like, soared almost up to the starting-point.

THREE times the chutes swept forth and back through a gradually shortening arc, while the white-faced Reb "feathered" the boom, to keep the swing regular. On the fourth downward swoop, a bolt between the third and fourth section of the chute broke. At the same instant Piotr's leg pulled from its hold, and there the two men hung, supported only by the grasp of the Russian's left hand.

By this time the men were gathering. In the blue-white glare of the flood-light their expressions stood out graphically. Tensed, alert, they took in the situation with a glance. Quick, covert looks were exchanged—looks at once startled, awakening, understanding. Then, as a summer shower revives and brightens a drought-scarred landscape, some indefinable, refining wave of feeling swept them, and the Bitter River job came into its own.

"Drop him, Pete! Drop him!" Their yells drowned the roar of the wind and the clatter of the hoist's exhaust. "Leggo the skunk—let loose!"

They made so much noise shouting their change of heart toward the foreman that I had a hard time getting the help that might save him. But at last I was able to start several of them throwing ropes in the path of the swinging chutes, to stop their headlong course—and soon the things were under control.

Reb and I shouldered our way through the crowd of workmen gathered at the end of the dangling chute. An atmosphere of silent repression pervaded their motionless ranks. The rain stopped abruptly. From overhead came the last faint remnant of abating wind whispering through the basket-work of the mast. Streaks of brilliant orange light flared high on the eastern horizon.

IN the very center of the rough circle the men had made around him, Reb and I found Piotr, still holding his potential murderer by the belt. For a single instant I looked deep into the Russian's eyes. Then one of the fearsome grimaces that was meant to be a smile spread over Piotr's face.

"Dot jinx, I catch him, Milt," he called. "Me an' dot jinx take goot ride, by tam!" Suddenly his smile vanished, and he addressed the crowd. "Hey!" he boomed. "W'at you t'ink dis iss—circus, mebby? Pick oop dot ropes! Make pull like hell! We fix dot chute. Pete Dudac, you roon by storeroom. Get inch-bolts for put in hole. Ho! Dot was *dobrey*, dot ride!"

He reached out and slapped the chutes a resounding thwack with his open palm—and the second bolt in the last section pulled apart. With a clatter and clank of hollow steel, sections of chute piled up around him, knocking him flat, and sending Tow spinning into the crowd.

Then the men moved. Piotr's attempt to get them to work had been gallant, and it might have succeeded if the chutes had not knocked him down. But as he dropped, there was a spontaneous forward movement of the men, to help him, and out of that irresistible, unified action the spirit of the mob was unaccountably born. They let Piotr lie and went for Tow.

Reb and I did our best to divert them, but the very weight of numbers made our efforts futile. Tow was literally hurled from hand to hand. I caught one glimpse of his bloody, awful face in that swirl of maddened men. He was hurled to the ground, snatched back to an erect position, the focus of a host of reaching hands. . . . It's hard to tell what might have happened had Piotr not kicked himself free from the pile of chutes and with a bellow of rage charged for the heart of the mêlée.

The big fellow was magnificent in his anger—magnificent and irresistible. His powerful hands fastened on the clothes of those who barred his path and sent the men within the clothes spinning to either side. One of his great arms flashed out, just in the nick of time, and warded off the slashing blow of a concrete spade that had been aimed at Tow's head. Wherever his flailing fists landed, a road was cleared. And he won through the mob—in time.

Piotr jerked the disheveled, bloody Tow from where he lay cringing on the ground, and held him, shivering with the palsy of fear, at arm's-length. For a moment he simply stood and stared at the terrified, cowering wretch; then his powerful muscles flexed, and Tow was lifted bodily from the ground, his arms and legs flopping grotesquely as Piotr shook him.

"What kind construction gank dis iss!" Piotr marveled, facing the men. "Waste time on t'ing like dis—try for kill man vot voork on same chob! Vot you want, be chust like he iss, eh? *Na dobrey*, dot business! Coom! Get busy! *Scoro!* Hurry! We lose ten batch, I dock payslips, by tam!"

The Phantom President

The amazing climax of this extraordinary and much-discussed story of the two men who were at the same time, under one name, President of these United States.

By GEORGE F. WORTS

Illustrated by Joseph Franké

The Story Thus Far:

"YOU are a business genius, Blair," said Ronkton, boss of the Prosperity Party. "We are fully aware of that—of what your brain in the White House would do for this country. But that is not the point—the point is, Blair, that never has anyone called you Ted or Teddy. We could never elect you."

Senator Pitcairn suggested that Blair could be built up. "Look what a few Indian feathers and a cowboy hat did for Coolidge! And remember how the people warmed to Hoover when he brought that kid to Washington—the one who saved the children in that Colorado blizzard."

"We can't dress Blair in Indian garb or have him suddenly begin entertaining heroes," Ronkton objected. "He's not the type for that—he's the aloof mental type."

That very night the fascinating rogue came upon the scene—Peter Varney, who had discovered that he bore a remarkable resemblance to Theodore Blair and had capitalized that resemblance by cashing a check signed supposedly by Blair. And out of this chance meeting grew a fantastic and daring scheme: why not run Blair for the Presidency, employing his double—a man of exceptional warmth and personal magnetism—to make the necessary public appearances? They knew that Blair could never win the votes of personal popularity—he had not even been able to win the love of the one woman he'd ever cared for: beautiful Felicia Hamilton, who indeed liked and admired him, but somehow held aloof. They knew that Varney was a rascal—there was the check episode, and his association with another shady character, Jimmy Carlyle. They did not know then, however, that only that day Varney had snatched a pistol from the hand of Kate Ingals' husband and struck him down with it—leaving finger-prints on the barrel. . . . (And they did not know that a mechanic in Steel City, who had lost a hand in the shops, was nursing an insane illogical grudge against Theodore Blair.)

They did learn of some of these things later, but only after they were committed to the venture. For Detective Murchison of the homicide squad found several people who thought they had seen Blair at the Ingals' house on the night of the murder. Of course Blair could prove an alibi. Indeed at his request his finger-prints were compared with those on the fatal pistol-barrel, and found wholly different. And Kate Ingals steadfastly maintained his innocence.

The plan proceeded. Varney claimed to have disposed of Carlyle. (Had he killed him too?) And he persuaded Kate Ingals to go abroad for six months—supplying her with money and promising to marry her after he became President. He memorized names, faces and relationships of Blair's friends, so carefully that he carried off chance meetings without causing suspicion. More, he called on Felicia; and she noticed in him a new warmth and magnetism and charm that temporarily quite won her.

Blair won the nomination. And Varney the rogue continued to make the needful public appearances. But Varney was not deceived. He knew how convenient it would be for Blair and the Big Four to have him out of the way before or immediately after the election. Since the conspiracy began, he had wondered how it would work out the other way round. If he could safely, quietly kill Blair immediately after the election, Peter Varney would be the next President of the United States.

But first he must make sure that he was not put out of the way himself. And by dint of starving himself Varney so altered his appearance that he forced Blair to

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"He's out!" De Kay yelled. "There he goes!" Varney had regained the Presidency of the United States by climbing out of a bedroom window.

remain in seclusion to prevent discovery of the deception. . . . And when the returns came in electing Theodore Blair to the Presidency, it was this gaunt but triumphant impostor who acknowledged the plaudits of the crowd. And it was Varney also who a few months later was inaugurated as President under Blair's name.

Then came the last straw. For that night Varney said:

"I just dropped in to discuss tomorrow's work. There are some questions I want your opinion on. But I'll use or not use your ideas, just as I see fit."

Blair, walking toward him, unfolded his arms. With his right fist he slugged Varney on the point of the chin. It was the first time Theodore K. Blair had ever hit a man.

The results were astounding. One of them was the forcible sequestration of Varney. Another was Blair's taking over his Presidency, risking detection of his double—and succeeding. A third was Varney's acknowledgment of defeat. "I'll play ball. I'm licked. I'll do anything you say," he told Ronkton.

Ronkton called the White House physician, who put the rogue on a milk-diet and sent him to bed till he should have recovered his weight. . . . But meanwhile Kate Ingals had returned to Washington, and from her a foreign secret agent had learned something about the Prisoner of the White House. To Washington also had come mad Martin Drum, his deadly steel hand perfected. *(The story continues in detail:)*

PURE raw milk, according to Dr. John E. Crewe, contains all the vitamins necessary to building healthy tissue. By sending a superabundance of corpuscles into the blood, poisons are washed away; the by-product of a raw-milk diet is a sensation of exuberance, of unbounded optimism, of intrepidity; a zest for living and for doing.

Peter Varney, having drunk between a gallon and a half and two gallons of the fluid daily for almost a month, had regained his looks, vigor and self-confidence, and had become, as a result, almost unmanageable.

"The way you've come back," Harvey Ronkton said on the rogue's second day out of bed, "is simply wonderful. You look even more like Blair than you did before."

Varney was moving about the room restlessly; he reminded Ronkton of a freshly caught wild animal.

Ronkton, in an old blue bathrobe, was seated in a wheel-chair, suffering from one of his periodic attacks of inflammatory rheumatism. He should have been in bed. But Jerrido Platt, Blair's servant, had been sent for by Pitcairn, and Ronkton dared not leave the rogue alone.

Varney went to the window which overlooked Sixteenth Street, then strode down the room to the window which overlooked the garden. He was cursing softly. He turned around, and rushed at Ronkton. He was breathing through nostrils and mouth. His eyes had a wanton look.

"Good God," he said, "I can't stand this! I can't stand being shut up like this. I've got to get out. I'll go crazy! I'm sick of this room, I'm sick of this house, and I'm sick of you."

"Take it easy," the man in the wheel-chair growled.

"Yes!"—savagely. "Take it easy! *You* haven't been shut up for a solid month!"

"Blair was shut up for nearly a solid year."

"Oh, hell! This is different. I'm not used to being shut up. I'm no hothouse plant. I'm used to activity, excitement."

"You know you can't go out."

"I'll start smashing furniture if I don't!"

"I'll have a talk with Blair this afternoon," Ronkton promised, "after Admiral Vining's funeral. He'll be in a mellow, receptive mood. He was a great admirer of the Admiral."

"Who in blazes was Admiral Vining?"

"Huh? Why, he was a famous old fighter. A wonderful old fighter. Didn't he do something in the Spanish War? Or was it the last war?"

"Perhaps," the rogue said sourly, "he was the one who said, 'Stop firing, men. Can't you hear the poor devils groaning?'"

"I thought that was Dewey."

"What do I care who it was? I've got to get out of here! If I don't get out, I'll go crazy!"

VICE PRESIDENT PITCAIRN, seated at the desk in his office, looked up into the spaniel eyes of Jerrido Platt.

"Jerrido, I am sure I can safely take you into my confidence. I sent for you because I know how devoted you are to the President. I'm sure you'd do anything in your power to help him, if he were in trouble."

The ex-corporal, standing before the desk at attention, said sturdily: "I would give my life for Mr. Blair."

"I'm sure you would, Jerrido. Now, here is the situation: You realize, of course, that the President cannot do justice to himself if his peace of mind is threatened. He is very much upset again about Varney. That man could, at this very moment, walk out of that house and be the President. I must speak very frankly. You know that Mr. Ronkton is trying to persuade the President to use Varney again."

"Yes sir."

"And you saw what happened when Varney was used before."

"Indeed I did, sir. And if you will pardon me, Mr. Pitcairn, I was just as opposed to it as you were. That man is a demon. He would not hesitate to kill the President. And he is in a very dangerous mood. When I left the house, he was pacing that room like a tiger."

The Vice President bent forward.

"Jerrido," he said, dropping his voice and looking steadily at the ex-corporal, "perhaps you can guess why I sent for you."

"Yes sir," Jerrido said, steadily returning his look. "You want me to kill that man."

The Vice President was a little surprised, but only for a moment. "Killing a man so deliberately, Jerrido, is a horrible thing."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pitcairn, but I don't look at it in that way at all. I've had it on my mind ever since all this began. If Mr. Varney had once played fair or been the least considerate, it would be different. But he has always been hateful. I know that the fate of the country depends on Mr. Blair. I would not consider myself a cold-blooded murderer in killing Mr. Varney. I would consider I was only doing my duty."

Such fiery sentiments, issuing from this small, slender man, with his sensitive face, his large, docile eyes, seemed to puzzle the Vice President. He looked as if it was hard for him to imagine Jerrido killing a man.

"Are you sure you would go through with it?"

"Yes sir!"

The Vice President remained dubious. "It must be done very soon. And it must be done quietly, secretly. How would you do it?"

"I've thought of several ways. I might poison him. I might shoot him. I might stab him."

"You must not hesitate."

"I will not hesitate!"

"Very well. When he is dead, notify me instantly. And if you should for one instant falter, remember, Jerrido, that the very security, the future of your country, is depending on you. When will you do it?"

"Today, sir—at the earliest opportunity."

WHEN the Assistant Secretary of State left the President's office, Niles De Kay came in. There was an excited air about him. His beefy face was redder than usual. He was puffing; his eyes looked dark. He gave the impression, as he approached the desk, of walking on tiptoe.

Blair was signing Army appointments. He did not look up.

The secretary put his hands on the edge of the desk and lowered his head six inches.

"That Ingals woman," he whispered, "is out there!"

The President put down his pen and raised his eyes.

"In your office?" he said calmly.

"Yep! Calling herself Mrs. Russell Boardman! She's been in Washington three days!"

"I know. Who am I seeing next?"

"Senator Burlington."

"How long is his appointment?"

"Twenty minutes."

"Make it for tomorrow. Send Mrs. Ingals in."

"Now, wait a minute, Chief. That woman is dangerous. Remember the trouble Varney had. Why not let Ronkton talk to her? He would put the fear of God into her. We don't want you messed up in this."

"I'm prepared for her. I want this settled."

De Kay was still scowling. "Shall I stick around?"

"No. I want to be alone with her."

"Shall I pop in, say, in five minutes?"

"No."

But De Kay was convinced that it was imprudent for Blair to see her. She was infatuated with him—that is to say, with Varney; and was doubtless afflicted with delusions of power and grandeur. It was bad psychology to let her see him. It gave her a foothold. When the secretary withdrew, he was still convinced that the President was making a great mistake in attempting to handle "that leopard."

Waiting for her to come in, Theodore Blair wondered what her attitude would be. With the rogue's experiences in mind, he pictured her clasping his head in her arms and clinging to him passionately. And these thoughts dismayed him. But when the widow of Chester Ingals came in, he saw that he need not have been concerned. Although he had never before seen Mrs. Ingals, he possessed photographs and detailed descriptions of her, as she had been and as she had become.

Her once golden-yellow hair was auburn. Her eyebrows had become highly arched, delicate pencilings. Something had been done to her face, giving it a mask of sophistication. She had acquired, in many subtle ways, a finished foreign air.

She was completely Parisian. Her costume was black. A small black hat framed her face. Her black dress had that inimitable elegance, that indescribable cleverness of cut, particularly at the neck-line, which distinguishes the aristocratic woman of Paris. Its simple lines revealed the slimness and grace of her beautiful figure, an effect that was scored again by the chain of five or six sables wrapped around her. The whole effect of her was one of aristocratic smartness, and it was composed of details almost too intangible for the masculine eye to distinguish. Such for example, as the delicate bloom of her make-up, the discreet gleam of a bracelet. Her stockings, matching her gloves, were deep-toned but very sheer. Her French shoes, hand-made, of course, fitted her small feet beautifully. A large cabochon emerald, set in her narrow little black purse, was in the observer's eyes, an authentic gem. Blair's certainty of this, any woman would have told him, was a tribute to the success of Kate Ingals' attempt.

With his faint smile, he stood up as she crossed the room. She had, he supposed, even learned that gracious, easy carriage. She was serenely self-assured.

"If you want a big story about the President, come up to my apartment immediately," said Kate Ingals.

She stopped, gave a jaunty little tilt to her head and said, with the accent of the cultured: "Here I am, Peter. May I present Mrs. Russell Boardman—Mr. President?"

Her self-assurance, the President reflected, was really remarkable.

"Please sit down," he said—and became aware of a perfume that was the very essence of her elegance.

Kate Ingals remained standing. Beautifully poised, she looked up at him with a small—and doubtless trained—smile. She looked at him steadily. Her large blue eyes, searching his eyes, possessed, it seemed to Blair, a challenge.

"You've changed," she said, and came behind the desk. She put her hands on his shoulders, reached up and kissed him.

But Blair did not move. She took away her lips but left her hands on his shoulders.

"Yes," she said, "you've changed. You're a different man, Peter—you've turned cold and hard. Well, so have I."

Her hands were resting lightly on his shoulders. Her eyes, round, deep and brilliantly blue, were exploring his eyes.

She was, he realized, peculiarly dangerous. The very fact that she had acquired flawless poise made her all the more dangerous. Flowering vines planted on the slopes of a volcano don't, he reflected, prevent it from erupting. Far more dangerous than the coldness she had cultivated with her Continental charm were her uncontrollable emotions.

"Peter, my dear," she said, with a soft laugh, "I do hope you don't think you've changed your mind."

Blair wished that she would take her hands away.

"I used to be in love with you," she said. "Now I'm in love with being the first lady of the land. I feel quite capable of meeting any social situation in the White House or anywhere else."

Still smiling, she withdrew her hands, turned and walked to a chair. She gracefully seated herself, crossed her knees, and smiled up at him with shimmering eyes.

"You must understand, to begin with," Blair said, "that there is no question of your social qualifications." He hated to hurt any woman. In his acquisition of wealth and power, he had mercilessly trampled on men. But in all his life he had deliberately hurt only one woman. He hated now to hurt this woman. He hated to disappoint her, and it was very evident that she was determined not to be disappointed.

"The real problem is, that the instant an announcement is made that I intend to marry, the newspapers will make the most exhaustive investigation of the woman. They will want her life-story."

"A nice one can be manufactured."

"Not one that will hold water. It would be so easy to find out who you really are."

"But no one could possibly recognize me. You don't yourself."

"It isn't a question of appearance only. You claim to be the wife, or widow, of a Russell Boardman. Who is Russell Boardman?"

"A fictitious Oklahoma oil-king."

"He'd be looked into. When it was found that there had never been such a man, there'd be trouble. Your stay in Europe would be investigated."

"By whom?" Her attitude was vaguely defiant.

"Reporters. Secret Service men."

"But you can prevent the Secret Service men from snooping. They're under your orders, aren't they?"

"It would make matters worse if I tried to suppress an investigation. I can't prevent reporters from digging up facts in connection with the very open love-affairs you had over there."

"With whom," she drawled, "did I have love-affairs, pray?"

"There was a Russian named Zarinov, in Paris; a French motion-picture actor named Fauré, in Biarritz; an Argentine, De Barra, a tango dancer, with whom you lived at the Negresco in Nice and traveled in Italy. Those facts can't be suppressed."

Kate Ingals placed an elbow on the slim crossed knee, and cupped her chin in her palm. She betrayed no agitation except for a narrowing and hardening of her blue eyes.

"I'm not ashamed of anything I've ever done, Peter. It was cheap and vile of you to have me spied on. There was nothing mentioned, when I agreed to go abroad, about love-affairs. I have certainly been discreet. No newspaper, here or abroad, would dare intimate that I have ever been indiscreet. You're making me sound notorious. You're simply trying to break your agreement."

"I'm trying," Blair said quietly, "to show you what a fatal mistake you would make in marrying me. You could not conceal your past. I couldn't conceal it for you."

"But you did murder my husband."

"If I married you, it would establish that I had murdered him. A scandal couldn't be prevented. I wish you could see it in this light."

"You wish," Kate Ingals said coolly, "I would accept a bribe and not annoy you. You agreed to marry me. And I won't let you back out of it."

"Marrying you would precipitate a scandal, an impeachment. It would mean, eventually, that I would stand trial for that murder."

"Those are clever arguments, but you know that a story can be manufactured about me. The reporters will believe you. The whole world will believe you."

"The risk is too great. Wouldn't living abroad, on a luxurious scale, appeal to you?"

"I hate France."

"Mightn't France, or Italy, be congenial if you had plenty of money?"

"I don't want money. I haven't spent a fifth of what you gave me."

"But won't you think it over for a few days? I could arrange to have a very generous sum placed to your credit in Paris or Rome, or wherever you wish."

"I've thought it over."

"Won't you think it over in light of what I've just said? You wouldn't deliberately ruin me, would you?".

"I honestly expected, the moment I came into this room, to fall madly in love with you all over again. But you're different. You're as cold as ice."

BLAIR, realizing that he had failed, wondered what Varney would do. He would, of course, appeal to her emotions. He would touch her heart by confessing a desperate need of her help. He would sweep her off her feet with a romantic appeal. Blair recalled that he had once, long ago, instructed Varney to do just this.

He walked over to her.

"Kate," he said, "please listen. I am trying hard to make good on this job. I need your help. I'm desperate. I've been worried sick over this situation. I'm throwing myself on your mercies. Please help me. By going abroad, you can help me. Not only me, but the country. The country's problems need every ounce of brains I have."

His voice, his feelings, were at first uncertain. But because he was actually sincere, his tone found a deep dramatic level.

"I'm not asking it for myself, but for the country. This is, I assure you, the most critical time in the country's history. Won't you—won't you help me?"

Kate Ingals' eyes had at first widened; and her face, under its cultivated immobility, had lightened, as might that of a musician who hears, in the midst of discords, a familiar melody. But as she stared up at him, her eyes had grown hard and brilliant. She sat back and produced a tinkling laugh.

"If you only knew Peter, how silly you sound!"

CHAPTER XXXI

"I HAD to see you," Leon Zarinov said, "because it's useless trying to see the President. I couldn't even get as far as Secretary De Kay. . And what I have to say could not be said safely in writing."

Harvey Ronkton was sorry that he had permitted Leon Zarinov to come in. He had, moved by curiosity, instructed a servant, on the house phone, to admit Mr. Zarinov. The servant had said that Mr. Zarinov wanted to see him on a matter of urgent importance to the President. Ronkton now suspected that Mr. Zarinov was that most obnoxious of all pests—a crank.

Yet the Russian did not look like a crank. There was no fanaticism in his eyes. His manner was suave, even distinguished. Perfectly groomed, with a slim pigskin brief-case under one arm, he might have been an embassy attaché. But Ronkton remained suspicious.

"I've been trying for two weeks," Zarinov said, "to get past the watchdogs at the Executive Offices."

"What do you want?"

"To lay some amazing information before the President. I know you can reach him, so I came to you."

Ronkton, a little worried over leaving the rogue unwatched in the adjoining room, and irritable with rheumatic pains, said gruffly: "What is it?"

"It is all here in this portfolio."

"State it briefly."

"What I want, Mr. Ronkton, is full recognition of the Soviet Republic and official endorsement by the President of the Soviet aims."

"You must be crazy."

"Worse," Zarinov said. "I am a blackmailer. I know that there are two Presidents."

Harvey Ronkton gripped the arms of the wheel-chair and strained forward.

"One of them," the Russian went on, "is Theodore K. Blair. The other is a man named Varney."

"Where did you hear this rotten, lying gossip?"

"The man named Varney is wanted on a charge of murdering a man named Ingals."

"Who told you this?"

"My agents have been collecting proof for months."

"You damned bolshevik!"

"I have, in this portfolio, an analysis of that evidence," Zarinov went on coolly. "I can prove that the man inaugurated President was not the man who is now in the White House."

Ronkton was making profane mutterings. His eyes had become blurred and bloodshot.

"I can prove conclusively that one hundred and thirty million American people have been outrageously hoaxed.

I am prepared to release this information through agents all over the country."

The man in the wheel-chair wiped his face with a large handkerchief. It fluttered in his hand like a flag of distress. His breath sounded as though it were grinding in his throat.

"How much do you want?"

"I don't want money. I am a Russian patriot, just as Mr. Blair is an American patriot. I am convinced that a talk with him would win him to my viewpoint. I am, you will say, a fanatic, but I claim that the principles I stand for are the right ones."

"You don't know," Ronkton snarled, "what you're saying. You want the President to start hell to blazing. You want him to fill the streets with blood. Anarchy! Riots! Revolution! Damn you, you're asking him to blow this country to smithereens. What's your price? Name your price!"

"I've named it. But you are wrong. A revolution in this country is inevitable. It is necessary. It is, actually, in progress. Led by the President, it would be controllable. There would be no riots, no bloodshed."

"You're crazy. One hour after he took the stand you want him to take, impeachment proceedings would be under way."

"Oh, no. He is too brilliant. He would find ways. He will find ways. I am offering him a chance to be the deliverer of a nation which is dying under oppression."

"Yes, by God!" Ronkton shouted. "A chance to deliver it into the hands of half-baked theorists waving red flags!"

The Russian shrugged. "I see a free, prosperous, contented America, whereas you see nothing but bloodshed and violence. I am offering President Blair the chance of leading a bloodless revolution. If he refuses, all your military forces can't cope with the fury of these millions of people—when they learn how ridiculously they have been duped."

"The people of this country," Ronkton roared, "wouldn't believe you!"

"If you refuse to arrange a conference with President Blair," Zarinov said coldly, "I will put that immediately to a test."

Ronkton, a veteran of many tight corners, had perfected the technique of sparring for time. Something, he was sure, could be done. But he needed time. His roving thoughts pounced on the Secret Service branch of the Department of Justice. Couldn't a large secret army put down this red menace? Couldn't it run down these agents of Zarinov's and, backed by the executive power, clap them all into solitary confinement?

Voices all around were suddenly screaming: "The President's been assassinated!"

"What you want, when you come right down to cases," he said, "is to advance the Russian cause. Russia needs money. I will agree to raise, in ten days, fifteen million dollars for the Russian cause, with a million bonus for you."

Zarinov said curtly: "I am not interested. It would be useless, Mr. Ronkton, to try to suppress this information. It is too widely distributed. You have no choice. I must see the President."

"I'll try to arrange an appointment."

"Later than today will be too late." Zarinov asserted.

"Where can I reach you?" inquired Ronkton.

Zarinov named his hotel.

"I'll make an appointment for this afternoon, sometime after the Vining funeral. I'll phone you inside of an hour."

"I will be waiting in my room."

When the door was shut, Ronkton wheeled his chair to the desk and picked up the telephone.

WITH the White House grounds on his left, Dan Murchison walked rapidly down Jackson Place. In his inner coat pocket was a note, hastily composed on hotel stationery, which he felt sure would gain him instant access to the President.

When he was halfway down the street, two cars drove up and stopped at the entrance to the Executive Offices. The first one he recognized as the President's, the other as the Secret Service car which always trailed it. Each was, except for its chauffeur, empty.

A group of men surged out of the doorway. One of them said to Dan Murchison: "Stand back."

"I want to see the President."

"Stand back."

Dan Murchison saw, in the center of the crowd, the heads of the President and Niles De Kay. He called: "Mr. Blair!"

The President did not hear him. His head was inclined. He was listening to what the Secretary was saying. The two men entered the first car. A Secret Service man jumped up beside the chauffeur as it drove off. Five or six operatives filed into the second car, and it followed closely after the first one.

Dan Murchison walked rapidly toward Pennsylvania Avenue. When he reached the end of the White House grounds, he saw the two cars round Lafayette Square and turn into Sixteenth Street. He was, a few seconds later, seated in a taxicab, following them.

He left the taxicab a block south of Ronkton's house and proceeded, on the other side of the street, afoot. The two cars were parked in front of Ronkton's. Secret Service men were lounging about. He approached one of them and said:

"Excuse me. I want to see the President on very important business. Give him this note."

NILES De KAY, with his broad back to the door which led into the hall, his hand on the knob, stared at Blair, who was seated at the desk in his favorite attitude.

Ronkton, gripping the arms of his wheel-chair, was glaring at Varney, who stood near the window which overlooked the garden. The rogue, with folded arms, was looking expectantly at Blair.

"Well," De Kay growled, "what are we going to do?"

"There's nothing to do," Ronkton answered the question, "but turn Varney over to the police. Put out the statement that he has been deliberately impersonating the President, since long before the inauguration—"

"Like hell!" Varney interrupted. "You can work this thing out somehow, but you won't throw me to the wolves. Blair, you've got the brains to solve this. What's to be done?"

Some one tapped three times on the door. A white envelope mysteriously slid into view under it. De Kay, who was nearest, picked it up, tore it open and removed a sheet of folded paper, which he unfolded and read.

"Listen," he said. "What the devil does this mean? *'Dear Mr. Blair: Can I see you immediately about thirty-seven drinking glasses and a black microphone?'* Signed, *'Murchison.'*"

"That flatfoot!" Ronkton groaned. "What the hell—"

"Fingerprints," Blair said. "Have him sent in. —Mr. Varney, you'd better wait in the other room."

"He's got us cold," Varney said. "He's come here to arrest me!"

"He can't touch you," Ronkton said irritably. "Leave him to Blair."

"You've got to promise I won't be sacrificed!"

"You won't be sacrificed," Blair said.

When the rogue had gone into the living-quarters, Niles De Kay went out. He returned with Dan Murchison.

The former chief of the Springfield Homicide Squad, sparing hardly a glance for Ronkton, walked to the desk. There was a thin smile at his lips.

"Well," he said boldly, "is it Mr. Blair or Mr. Varney?"

"Don't get so cocky," De Kay growled. "You're talking to the President of the United States."

"Oh, excuse me," the detective mocked. "I'm not as smart as you are, Mr. De Kay. Which one is it? I can't tell 'em apart. Please accept my humble apologies, Mr. President."

Blair looked up at him with his faint smile.

"Well, Mr. Murchison?"

"Yes sir. Here I am—with all the dope. I want Varney."

"What are you talking about?" Ronkton said.

"Gentlemen, I've spent more than a year on this case," the detective said, "and I'm not going to be taken for any more buggy-rides. I know that a man named Peter Varney, who is the spit and image of you, Mr. Blair, killed Chester Ingals. And I know Peter Varney is doubling for you as the President. Before the inauguration, he used to take all his meals at the New Willard. So did I. I collected thirty-seven drinking-glasses he used, and I've got the microphone he grabbed accidentally when he made the inaugural address. His fingerprints match the ones on the gun that smashed in Chester Ingals' head. I've got a warrant right here in my pocket."

BLAIR was, once again, seeing life as a black torrent, carrying him to destruction. He could see absolutely no hope for himself or for the men who depended on his ability to solve difficult problems. The attitude of Kate Ingals had alarmed him; but with the news of Leon Zarinov, he had begun to think that any plan was futile. Murchison was by way of being a last straw.

Looking up into the face of Niles De Kay, who was now standing beside Murchison, he saw white lines of nervous tension. De Kay looked bewildered, defeated, old. He saw what De Kay was seeing: the impossibility of withholding this scandal from the American public.

The detective said: "I want Varney."

"Oh, you want Varney," Ronkton sarcastically echoed, in his thin, gritty voice. "You want to expose the President. You want to start a revolution too. What a hell of an American you are!"

Dan Murchison turned his head and gave him an oblique stare.

"What kind of an American does this make *you?*" he asked. "I don't want to start any scandal, but the way I fell down on landing the murderer of Chester Ingals was just as much of a scandal to me as this would be to you."

"What you don't realize," De Kay said, "is that you turned traitor to your country, giving that communist all this information."

"I didn't give Zarinov any information. He got it himself. All I got was the fingerprints on the drinking-glasses and the mike. He had a hundred men working under him. Could I stop him?"

"You could have notified us." Ronkton said.

"Where would that have got me? Don't forget, I came to you before. All I got was a horse-laugh."

"How much do you want?"

"I don't want money."

"He's another one of these idealists," said De Kay.

"You ought to know," the man in the wheel-chair said, "that you shouldn't come charging in here like a wild bull. Why can't you be sensible, Murchison? Help us, and we'll help you. At least, give us a little time to think. What do you want? Now, talk business."

"All right. What I want is to get into politics. I certainly deserve something for what I've gone through."

"What kind of job do you want?"

"I want to be Governor-General of the Philippines."

"Ah, yes," Ronkton sighed. "You want to be Governor-General of the Philippines."

"You're quite serious?" Blair said quickly.

"Yes sir. When I was a lad, I fought out there under Black Jack Pershing. I've always wanted to go back. It's all up to you, Mr. President."

"We will take the matter under advisement, Mr. Murchison. I will give you an answer within twenty-four hours. Are you staying at the New Willard?"

"Yes sir."

"Mr. De Kay will make an appointment for you and notify you tomorrow."

"Thank you, Mr. President!"

When Murchison had gone, Ronkton said: "Blair, I see only one way out of this: Murchison and that bolshevik have got to be killed."

"That would only make matters worse. The information they've collected is in the hands of Zarinov's agents."

"Can't you think of any way out?"

"I'll try to think of something."

De Kay, with a groan, turned from the desk. Then suddenly, "Oh, my God!" he cried in the accents of agony, and ran heavily to the front window. He had, Blair feared, lost his mind.

"He's out!" De Kay yelled. "There he goes!"

Blair ran down the room. He saw Varney, surrounded by Secret Service men, enter the car. The car started. The Secret Service men entered the one behind. It followed.

There was a groan and a heavy thump. Harvey Ronkton, unconscious, had fallen out of the wheel-chair.

For Mr. Blair's sake, for his country's sake, he must strike!

CHAPTER XXXII

PETER VARNEY had regained the Presidency of the United States by climbing out of a bedroom window.

Reclining in the tonneau of the car as it sped along Sixteenth Street toward the White House, he once again tasted the intoxicating ambrosia of power. But he was thinking with a clarity that he had never before enjoyed. His plans were perfected. Rejecting all emotions save a justifiable feeling of pride over his cleverness, he informed himself that he was thinking coolly and logically.

He was capable of mastering a situation which baffled the greatest brain in America. He wondered at this cool thinking, this straightness of inner vision. He thought it must be all that milk!

He would see Zarinov and Murchison. He would give Murchison the post he wanted in the Philippines. That would silence him forever. And he would agree to Zarinov's plans. Why, after all, shouldn't the United States go bolshevist? It would be an exciting experiment. There would be riots and conflagrations. He would become known as the man who liberated America from the yoke of capitalism.

When the car reached the Executive Offices, Varney went into the President's office. Seating himself at the desk, he called, on one of the private telephones, a discreet family hotel near Thomas Circle.

"I want Mr. Edward Smith."

When Mr. Smith answered, Varney said to him: "Hello, Mr. Smith? This is the President."

"Oh, yes, Mr. President."

"I wanted to let you know that everything is ready. You can proceed immediately with your plans. Go now, and go again at five."

"Thank you, Mr. President."

Varney next called the unlisted number of the telephone in Ronkton's gray room. De Kay answered.

"Mr. De Kay," the rogue said, "I wanted to tell you that a Mr. Edward Smith will call there very shortly, and that it would be an excellent idea to talk to him and to carry out the excellent proposal he makes. I should advise that you coöperate with him fully. Good-by."

He had hardly terminated the call when Dr. Melrose unannounced, entered the office. The White House physician was rosy with rage.

"You dirty, double-crossing skunk—" he began.

Before he could continue his indictment, one of the assistant secretaries came in, and said: "Mr. President, it is time to go to the cathedral."

"What cathedral?"

"The National Cathedral, sir."

"Why?"

"The services for Rear Admiral Vining begin in eight minutes."

"Oh, yes. I'd forgotten." He looked at the White House physician. One of the rogue's eyebrows slid up. "That matter we were discussing, Doctor," he said amiably, "has been settled to my satisfaction. If you wish, I will, of course, be delighted to talk it over with you later."

He gave Dr. Melrose his warm, magnetic smile, and went out swiftly.

MR. EDWARD SMITH—or, to call him by his actual name, Mr. James Carlyle—was walking briskly along the sunny side of Massachusetts Avenue, peeling gold foil from a cigar and thinking sunny thoughts.

His enforced retirement since the night of his talk with Peter Varney on the old toll-bridge in Steel City, a year ago, had provided Jimmy Carlyle with a splendid opportunity for reflection. Most of the time he had spent in Buffalo, New York, where he had met Dora Brooks, a charming, vivacious and virtuous young woman who had, with innocent unawareness, inspired him to reform. He was through with any form of business transaction even remotely bordering upon the questionable. He would soon be enabled to marry Miss Brooks and to live decently and honestly, not to say in regal splendor, for the rest of his life.

It would be, he had decided, a delightful and rather simple life. There would be a beautiful home in the country, and a beautiful home in the city, either New York or Chicago. There would be wonderful trips, leisure, luxury. . . .

"No," Felicia said. "I'm convinced. You'd never tell him or any other man a thing like that."

As he touched a flaming match to the cigar he wondered if Peter Varney had grown tired of the game of presidents. In their several talks since the one on the old toll-bridge, they had agreed that it would of course be judicious to strike when Varney had Blair and his crowd in a corner. Skillful reasoning left Jimmy Carlyle with the conviction that, though Varney might now have the upper hand, his supremacy was threatened.

It naturally did not occur to Carlyle that Varney was planning to lead a revolution and wanted some available cash in case the revolution went wrong.

THE trying events of the day had left Niles De Kay spiritually and physically exhausted. But when Peter Varney telephoned, he roused himself a little.

"Who the devil," he feebly wanted to know, "is Edward Smith?"

Blair, at the desk, said he didn't know. "You'll have to see him."

De Kay sighed. "I can't listen to many more propositions today," he said; but when a servant knocked on the door, he pulled himself together.

Who, De Kay asked himself, as Blair went into the bedroom, was Edward Smith?

He opened the door, and his bloodshot eyes stared at the round, pink, smiling face of Jimmy Carlyle. De Kay, whose memory for faces was so remarkable that he often boasted about it, immediately identified his caller as the man he had seen dining with Peter Varney in a Steel City speak-easy on the night when this lamentable farce had begun.

He had been so sure that the body of this man was in the bottom of Ten Mile River that, seeing him standing there, living, breathing and smiling with such assurance, was almost more than his shattered nervous system could accommodate. This glimpse of the dead, risen, dry and whole, from the muddy bed of a river, sent him staggering backward into the room. A pain shot through his heart. A taste as sharp as electricity tingled over his tongue.

"Good God!"

Jimmy Carlyle, with his jaunty smile, came in and shut the heavy oak door. He looked amiably about him.

"Hello, De Kay! Where's Blair?"

De Kay, recovering slightly from the shock, was suddenly wrathful at this new evidence of Peter Varney's capacity for duplicity.

"What the hell do you want?" he said savagely.

"One million dollars," Jimmy Carlyle answered, "in Liberty Bonds."

The secretary tried to think, but he was too furious.

"Am I supposed to have them in my pocket?"

"No. I'll drop in for them around five."

"What else did Varney tell you to say?"

"He said you'd understand," replied Carlyle coolly.

"All right. I understand."

Carlyle opened the door and slipped out. It was well that he hurried. If the conversation had been protracted any longer, De Kay could not have restrained himself from hurling the handiest piece of furniture at him. . . .

The instant the door closed, Blair came out of the living-quarters and went to the desk. His walk gave the impression that he was limping. His face was white.

He said, in a listless voice: "Will you attend to it? Have you the keys to my safety-deposit box with you?"

"Yes, Chief; but we can't let 'em get away with this!"

"We have no choice."

"But you haven't got that many Liberty Bonds."

"Weren't there some more among those securities that came on from Steel City a week ago?"

"I don't remember," De Kay said, and expelled his breath through his teeth. "I wouldn't mind it so much if you didn't look as if they had you on the run. You look as if the fight was all out of you."

"It is—practically."

"You're just trying to block these punches as they come."

"That's all."

De Kay took a deep breath. "Now, look here, Chief. Things have been coming fast and heavy, but you aren't licked."

"I could have handled Murchison, and I might have worked out a plan for Zarinov. But I can't handle the Ingals woman, and I can't handle Varney."

"Listen, Chief. You sit here. You think. Concentrate! You'll think us out of this jam. You always have before. I'll be back before five. You just sit here and think."

Blair gave him a faint smile. "Very well," he said.

AS the funeral procession was leaving the National Cathedral, Jerrido Platt, in his wanderings, reached the Naval Observatory. He had, since his talk with the Vice President, walked many miles, trying to force himself to the feverish emotional pitch which would overcome an unexpected aversion to the killing of Peter Varney.

It was not that he had moral objections, or feared that he would, by mistake, kill Mr. Blair. This was impossible. He knew that Varney was a prisoner in Ronkton's house. He simply could not rid himself of the reluctance to kill a man who was the image of his hero. Each time these doubts arose, in the course of that long aimless walk, Jerrido told himself that it must be done. If he did not get it done, he would be a coward—he would not be fit to live.

The darkly beautiful strains of the Dead March in "Saul" drew him around the circle to Massachusetts Avenue, and he saw the procession approaching. It was, he recalled, the funeral of Rear Admiral Staunton Vining. It was led by an admiral mounted on a black horse. The staff of the admiral followed. Then came the band, and a regiment of bluejackets.

Jerrido, with mournful eyes, watched them pass. A caisson, drawn by horses, carried the clay of Rear Admiral Vining. Just behind the caisson was the President's car. A Secret Service man was riding on each running-board. Behind that car was another full of Secret Service men.

But Jerrido did not see them. His head was going up and down in little nods in time with the dead march. His glowing eyes were on the President, whose eyes were fixed on unfathomable distance. His nobility suddenly struck Jerrido as it never had before. It filled him with resolution. In his sudden, great emotion, tears quivered on Jerrido's eyelids.

It was as if he had drunk deeply at a fresh well of inspiration. He lingered to see no more of the procession. Fighting his way through the crowd, he made his way to Wisconsin Avenue. He found an idle taxicab. He gave the driver the number of the house on Sixteenth Street.

"Drive like hell! It's a matter of life and death!"

KATE INGALS was storming up and down her attractive drawing-room. She had removed only her sables. Her hat was pushed up on her forehead. One hand was at her hip, the other was grasping an emerald-and-jet cigarette holder, the bit of which threatened, at any moment, to be crunched between her teeth. Rage swept through her in kindling waves.

She took little steps and quick, furious puffs. Her high heels on the hard wood made sharp detonations as regularly spaced as machine-gun explosions. Puff—inhale—exhale. Puff—inhale—exhale.

"Damn his soul!"

He had cheated her. He had insulted her. He had robbed her of her rights. He had spoiled her life.

"I am not asking it for myself, but for the country."

"You hypocrite! You liar!"

She tried to compose herself. She couldn't compose herself. She didn't want to compose herself. She had been trampled upon by that cold-blooded brute.

She went to the telephone. She called, as rapidly as the connections could be made, the offices of six Washington correspondents. She said to each:

"If you want a big story about the President, come up to my apartment immediately."

She began pacing again. In the tense ugliness of her face there suddenly appeared a surprised, delighted little smile. She couldn't be the First Lady of the Land, but she would be the most-talked-about, most-interviewed, most-photographed woman in the world!

LEON ZARINOV, waiting in his hotel bedroom for the telephone call from Harvey Ronkton, knew that he would not be permitted to see the President. He had been an utter fool to believe that Blair would give him an interview.

The Russian suddenly realized what a great mistake he had made. What a presumptuous ass he had been, dreaming that he might match his brain against Blair's! It was appalling. Blair would be, at this very moment, taking steps to obstruct his plans.

"I've bungled the opportunity of a lifetime!"

He had, indeed. He had not thought clearly or straightly. He had been dazzled by the sensational importance of his discoveries. He had taken the wrong course. He should have been more patient. He should have seen Varney—not Blair.

What would Blair do?

"If our positions were reversed, I should, first of all, have him tracked down and killed."

Unquestionably, Blair would have that done. Or Ronkton would have it done.

Leon Zarinov, from a suave young diplomat, suddenly became a very scared young man.

"All I can do now is to try to strike before he does!"

On the desk, in a neat stack, were lengthy telegrams addressed to three hundred and eighty of his agents, situated in the most strategic parts of the United States.

He snatched them up and ran to the door. . . .

Washington is not a speak-easy town, as is New York, Chicago or San Francisco. But speak-easies do, somewhat darkly, exist in Washington. Dan Murchison was patronizing one on H Street.

With four drinks of questionable rye to sharpen his brain, he was seeing things very clearly. He was beginning to realize that Theodore K. Blair, or Ronkton, was going to order him killed. That was how these big shots worked. If a man stood in their way, they killed him.

He would not go near them again; he had decided that he would rather have the glory of being the man who exposed this gigantic conspiracy than be shipped quietly off to the Philippines.

He would return immediately to Springfield, where he was known and respected. There was a time-table in his pocket. He looked at it and found that a train left for Springfield in about forty minutes. He'd come back later for his belongings. He would present the results of his laborious investigation to the Springfield Police Department. They would have to act on it. If they refused, he would shout it on street-corners. They wouldn't refuse. He would, very shortly, be famous.

He saw himself being appointed Chief of Police. The man who exposed the Presidential scandal! No, by golly! He would demand the police commissionership! Yet why, he asked himself, should he, in fairness to himself, be satisfied with that? He deserved a higher honor, a greater reward. He would, he decided, become the mayor of Springfield. "But I will be the most talked-about man in the country!" Why not really cash in? Wouldn't he be, politically, the biggest man in the State? "I will insist on the governorship," was his final decision. . . .

Jimmy Carlyle, in his hotel room, was writing a long letter to Dora Brooks. It would be enclosed in a sealed envelope, and this envelope would be contained in another envelope.

On the face of the inner one, Carlyle wrote:

"Darling: Do not open this envelope except in case of my death. —Jimmy."

The sealed, inner envelope would contain the detailed exposure of the Varney-Blair affair, beginning with the night when Varney met the Big Four in Tony Moretti's speak-easy. Every statement could be checked up. The document was to be placed in the hands of the editor of Buffalo's leading newspaper.

He distrusted Varney. He was afraid. He knew what men like Ronkton and De Kay did to men like him. . . .

Jerrido Platt, in the cellar of the Ronkton house, was sharpening with an oilstone the bayonet with which he would kill Peter Varney. It was a German bayonet he had picked up on the battlefield while helping to straighten out the St. Mihiel salient, and kept as a souvenir.

A fiery exaltation coursed through him. He was no longer held back by the fact that the man in the room upstairs was the image of his master.

That man must, for the sake of Mr. Blair, for the sake of the country, be killed!

KATE INGALS, waiting for the Washington correspondents to come, heard the news from a bellboy.

"The President's been assassinated!"

Leon Zarinov, about to enter a telegraph-office, was knocked against the window. The boy yelled:

"The President's been assassinated!"

Dan Murchison, entering the Union Station, heard a redcap cry:

"The President's been assassinated!"

Jimmy Carlyle, with the letter to Dora Brooks in his hand, was shouted at, as he approached a mailbox, by a taxi-driver:

"The President's been assassinated!"

Felicia Hamilton, who was, with her father and mother, in the eleventh car behind the President's, heard, above the Dead March, the brief, stuttering explosion of the assassin's pistol.

Voices all around her were suddenly screaming:

"The President's been assassinated!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

JERRIDO quietly unlocked the door of the gray room slipped in, holding the bayonet behind him. The man whom he had been inspired, by that glimpse of his hero, to kill, was seated at the desk with his elbows on the blotter, his fingertips pressed together, his eyes fixed on the opposite wall.

He seemed unaware that Jerrido had come into the room. He did not look at Jerrido, as Jerrido crept along the wall. And Jerrido, creeping along the wall, was once again assailed by doubt. How many times in the sweet, serene past, he had seen his master sitting at the desk in his library in that selfsame posture! Once, indeed, how that very posture had betrayed him! How often he had been mistaken! But he was not mistaken now.

Jerrido slipped behind the desk. He gripped the handle of the bayonet. He lifted the blade above the man's back.

Blair sighed. And it was the long, labored sigh of a man whose heart is sore, whose very soul is weary.

The ex-corporal stared at the broad back. His hand, clutching the bayonet, would not move. He could not strike. He could not drive the bayonet into the heart of this man who so closely resembled his master. For Mr. Blair's sake, for his country's sake, he must kill him. He must strike. But he could not strike. In his anguish, he groaned.

Blair turned about in his chair. He saw Jerrido against the wall, with the bayonet shaking in his hand, with his face gray and wet, his eyes glittering terribly, his mouth distorted in an awful grimace.

Blair stared. "Oh, God," he said. "Jerrido—oh, no!" He began to laugh helplessly. "Really you're mistaken, Jerrido. You're mistaken again."

He got up and walked past the ex-corporal toward the window at the other end of the room, the window from which he had seen Peter Varney, solicitously attended by Secret Service men, enter his car and drive off. Midway, he turned. His face was angrily flushed. His eyes had an ugly look.

"Another mistake," he said. "That sums it all up. From start to finish, the whole thing's been nothing but a series of damned mistakes!"

Jerrido, supported by the wall, with the bayonet on the floor at his feet, looked at him. He coughed faintly. The sound, falling into the silence of the big gray room, was like a muffled explosion. A tortured groan followed it. Jerrido pushed himself away from the wall and reached down for the bayonet.

He disappeared behind the desk. He straightened up. The bayonet was again in his hand, but this time it was pointed at his throat. His hand was shaking so that the point described large quivering ovals.

"Drop that damned thing!"

Blair ran behind the desk and struck Jerrido's elbow with his hand as Jerrido, about to purge his disgrace, brought the wavering point up. Missing his throat by several inches, the point went into the wall. His hand fell away. The bayonet remained there. Blair jerked it out and threw it under the desk. "Pull yourself together."

"I'm—I'm not fit to live," Jerrido faltered.

"But I need you. Don't you understand, Jerrido, that I need you more than I ever have?"

"Yes, Mr. Blair."

The hall door opened. Niles De Kay staggered in. He was puffing, as if he had been running.

"Blair!" he panted. "Varney's dead! Killed! Shot by some crank! Some fellow with a steel hand! At the Vining funeral!"

The telephone began to ring.

"Shut that door," Blair snapped. "Jerrido, don't answer that phone. Sit down, De Kay."

Some one hammered on the door.

"It's Melrose!" a muffled voice said.

"Shall I let him in, sir?"

"Yes."

Jerrido opened the door. The White House physician came in, hatless. His eyes were terrified. He looked ill.

"Have you heard?"

"Yes."

"They've taken him to the White House. He was shot six times. His chest was simply torn to pieces. One bullet went through the heart, two went into the brain. Jesus!"

De Kay, in a heap in a chair, groaned. "What are we going to do, Chief? What in God's name are we going to do?"

"Nothing. It's done. Pitcairn is President."

"But what's going to happen to us all?"

"Nothing can happen."

"We'll be exposed. We're ruined!"

"No. You're saved."

"How about all these people who know? The Ingals woman? That rat Carlyle?

"She never knew there were two of us. All Carlyle can tell is a fantastic story which no one will believe."

"But Zarinov—Murchison!"

"They can't prove anything now. The only actual evidence they have is fingerprints. To use fingerprints, you must have fingers. And anything Zarinov or his agents might say would be accepted as nothing but lying gossip. You don't seem to realize," he smiled, "that I'm a martyr, gentlemen, with Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley."

De Kay and Melrose stared at him. "That's true!"

"But what are you going to do, Chief?" De Kay asked. "You're a martyr, all right. You're officially dead. But what are you going to do?"

"I'll get out of here somehow, as soon as possible."

"How?"

"That's no problem. I'll have to get out of the country and stay out."

"It isn't fair," De Kay protested. "You're the real goat. We're safe. I can see that now. But it's rotten to make you the goat. You don't deserve this. Of all of us, you're the one man who went into this without an ax to grind."

"Don't worry about me. You'd both better go. This house may be watched. Don't come back. Tell Pitcairn not to come here. Tell him he must not come here. Now run along. You've got work to do and I've got plans to make."

"What'll I do with these damned bonds?"

"Keep them. I'll get in touch with you, through Jerrido. He'll have to see you about passports too. Now clear out of here."

HE was, he reflected, after their departure, faced by a unique problem. He had officially ceased to exist. There was no longer a Theodore K. Blair. The question was, what was to be done with his life? He had no ties. He was still relatively young. He had yet to reach that age which men describe, perhaps optimistically, as the prime of life. He could not, certainly, ever enter again the world of affairs. And he was surprised to find that he didn't care. Actually, he was relieved. For the first time in his life he had no responsibilities. Robbed by an assassin—a man with a steel hand—of power and authority, he was suddenly answerable to no one!

He would, of course, have to grow a beard, a long beard. Once, as a small boy, he had looked forward to maturity as an opportunity to grow a long, luxuriant beard.

He pictured himself with a long black beard. It would reach to his waist. He would, when talking to people, grasp it in his hand and tug at it to accentuate his points, as his grandfather had. He would look like Teach the pirate, who used to climb aboard helpless merchantmen with a cutlass in his teeth and phosphorous matches burning in his beard to frighten his enemies. What, he wondered, had prevented Captain Teach's beard from catching fire?

NOW that Theodore K. Blair was dead, who was he? He recalled that the one man in the world he had most wanted his life to be, was ostensibly the man who now lay dead, riddled with bullets, in the White House.

Why settle down? He would become, under another name, of course, a rover, a care-free adventurer.

"For the first time in my life, I'll be free. I'll have time to do the things I've always wanted to do. I've always wanted to live. I'm going to live."

Some one tapped on the hall door. Blair looked at Jerrido, who was standing at attention against the back window.

"See who it is."

Jerrido went to the door and opened it an inch. A girl's voice cried, "Let me in! I know he's here!"

"It's Miss Hamilton, sir."

"Let her come in. Stay outside. Don't let anyone else in."

"Very well, sir."

Felicia, just over the threshold, paused. She was white. Her lips were gray. All her life seemed to be in her eyes.

She said, in a husky whisper: "Which one are you?"

Blair folded his arms and looked at her.

"Does it matter?"

"It matters terribly."

"It might," he said playfully, "remain a mystery."

She made a little whimpering sound. "I know who you are. You're—the other one."

"How can you tell?"

"You wouldn't joke at a time like this, if you weren't."

"But perhaps this is the time when there's nothing to do but joke."

She walked slowly toward him, uncertainly, until he could have reached out and touched her.

"Please don't joke. Please tell me who you are."

"Who do you want me to be?"

She looked up at his eyes, dropped her eyes to his mouth, then looked back quickly at his eyes. She stepped back. Her eyes suddenly went dull. She said: "I hate you. I've always hated you."

"But Felicia—darling!" He laughed. "I'm T. K. Blair."

"I don't believe it." She stared at him. "I don't believe it," she slowly repeated. Her eyes were no longer dull. "You've been responsible for all his unhappiness, and all my unhappiness. And you're living, and he's dead."

He laughed again. "Felicia, I've always been so proud of your discrimination. I *am* T. K. Blair. I'm not the other one. Let me prove it."

She was fumbling for the doorknob.

"You could prove anything," she said. "He must have told you everything that ever happened between himself and everyone he knew. So you'd be posted."

"But darling, you and I have known each other for six years. How could I have told him everything that happened in all those years—all the times we were together? Let me prove it."

She looked at him defiantly.

"All right," she said crisply. "Once, about five years ago, T. K. Blair and I went driving in my roadster. We were going to a luncheon at the High Hill country club. What happened?"

"It began to rain," Blair said promptly. "There weren't any side-curtains in the car. We were drenched. It rained so hard that I couldn't see to drive. We pulled off the road under a big tree, and you were wailing because the rain ruined the new dress you had on. You said it had been made specially for you by Chanel. Your hand was on your knee, trying to smooth out the wrinkles in the dress—a blue dress. I picked your hand up and kissed it. You were amused. You said: 'You'd better stick to shaking hands, Theodore. This isn't up your street.' I don't know why," he concluded sternly, "I kept right on being in love with you after that."

FELICIA said, "Oh!" She looked doubtful, but only doubtful. "He could have told you that."

"You think so? Ask me another!"

"I will," she said grimly. "What lake did T.K. and I drive to once, that we'd never been to before—or since? What time of the year was it, what car, and what time of day?"

"Lake Largo," Blair answered. "In my maroon coupé, 1929 model, on an autumn night, about nine o'clock. There was a crescent moon. You said, wasn't it funny how people kept trying to invent new similes for the moon. You said: 'T.K., you're a thinker. Present me with a brand-new simile.'

"I said: 'It looks like you.'

"You said: 'Are you going to get poetical, T.K.? Very well,' you said, 'why does it look like me?'

"I said: 'I don't know. Just because it's beautiful—and crisp—and clean-cut.' And you laughed and said: 'Really, T.K.! Such emotion! This isn't like you.'"

"It was awful," Felicia said in a hushed voice, "how I used to laugh at you!"

"Would I," Blair challenged, "have told Peter Varney about that conversation?"

Felicia looked up at him, her eyes shining.

"*Thank God!*" she said.

"Are you sure? Do you want to ask me another?"

"No," Felicia said. "No. I'm convinced. You'd never tell him or any other man about a thing like that." She gave a little sob. "Oh, darling. My poor, poor darling!"

"If you only knew," Blair said, "how I've been waiting—" He kissed her.

"When I think what you've been through—" Felicia began.

"I don't deserve sympathy. I don't want it," he said, with his arms around her. "It's the first time in my life I've ever been absolutely happy."

"BUT what are we going to do?" Felicia asked.

"First," he said, "we're going to grow a long bushy beard. Then we're going abroad. I don't know where. I don't care. But maybe you care."

She laughed. "No. I don't care, because I'm happy too. But you can't stay in this house. It's too dangerous. Where is Harvey Ronkton?"

"Upstairs in bed, very sick. He's full of morphine and won't know what's happened until tomorrow."

"You must be out of here by tonight. Why can't we go to Dad's camp in Maine? It's closed. There isn't a soul for miles around. I can land the amphibian there. We can stay there while you grow a beard. We'll take Jerrido. We'll start sometime after midnight tonight, so we'll have daylight to land by."

She stood back and looked up at him. "I'm going to the airport now and have my ship gassed up. I'll be back sometime after six." Her eyes darkened. "Do you realize that this mood of yours won't last, T.K.? You can't give up everything without regretting it. You're going to regret it horribly."

"So are you," he pointed out.

"Women are more adjustable," she said. "You're going to have some very bad moments."

"I'm thinking," Blair said, "of the other ones."

PITCAIRN came shortly after she had left. He had, he admitted, received Blair's message. But he had had to come.

"You shouldn't have come," Blair said sternly. "It's too risky. There's nothing you can do."

The new President, looking ten years older, fixed tragic eyes on him.

"You know," he said, "that you can trust me to carry out all your ideas. I will adhere faithfully to your program. There isn't any man in this country better fitted to be President than you; but I'll do, to the best of my ability, what you would have done."

His voice had become thick. He had to clear his throat before he could continue: "I came here to tell you that America needn't lose its greatest man. You can somehow arrange to tell me what to do. You will still be the man who will save America. I will be your mouthpiece. You are still the President."

"No," Blair said. "I'm through. I've lost an illusion. I don't want it back."

THINKING of this, some hours later, as the amphibian climbed up into the darkness over the Arlington field, Blair reassured himself that he didn't want it back. Pitcairn, once he recovered from the shock, would fall completely under its spell. All men did. Since time began, all men had. Pitcairn would, of course, make his own kind of mistakes. He was an aristocrat.

Aristocracy was an anachronism. The old order was doomed. But Pitcairn would put up a valiant fight, because he had the power. He would do what all men did when they acquired power. He would use it to inflict his opinions on other men. And his intentions would be honorable!

What right, Blair wondered, had any man to impose his little ideas, his prejudices, on millions of people, simply because he had acquired the power to do so? He could recall no man who had been born with power, who had acquired power, or had power thrust upon him, who had not grossly abused his privilege.

The amphibian turned toward the north. He saw the reflection of the Monument, with its snowy tip, in the long pool which stretched from its base to the Lincoln Memorial. He recalled his lonely nights on the South Portico, the one joyous night when he had held communion with the ghosts of the past.

The reflection vanished. The radial motor, roaring, sent out from its exhaust a filmy lavender breath of flame. He saw the White House, brightly lighted. Then Washington became a plain of lights, like heaven inverted, shimmering through a haze.

Power, the late and powerless Mr. Blair reflected, as he soared a little nearer to the stars, is a great mistake.

THE END

Red Hunter's Gold

A fine drama of the West today, by the author of "The Vanishing Fleets," "The Plunderer" and other stories.

By ROY NORTON

Illustrated by Charles Fox

THE village of Summit looked like a stage set for a Western movie, with a single long dusty street bordered by ancient stores with weather-beaten wooden awnings in front, leading off into a distance of miscellaneous houses faced by fine old trees that had lived to see generations of prospectors, miners, lumbermen, and shake-cutters come and go, or come and die. At that drowsy hour of four o'clock in the afternoon it seemed almost untenanted, asleep. Then the movie became a sound picture opening to life with a howl of amusement; and a roughly made pack flew from the rough veranda in front of Peabody's general store, dissolved in mid-air, and like a lot of ungainly, sun-smitten, aimless bats its contents flapped and fluttered into the dust of the road. Its owner ran frantically out and on hands and knees began recovering some ragged blue shirts, a ragged pair of overalls faded from wear and wash, and divers smaller possessions like an old alarm-clock, a broken mirror, and some crudely beaded ornaments and pouches, quite as if this rubbish was to him immensely precious.

Idaho Smith, who had emerged from the store where he had been giving an order for three-months' supply of "sowbelly and beans," stopped and looked around hopefully, as if eager to find anything worth laughing over. His eyes fell on the three rowdies on the edge of the plank walk and he thought, "Humph! Some fools from over at the sawmill, playin' horse." Then his gaze traveled onward—saw the man scrabbling in the dust to recover his belongings, paused, returned to the three roisterers and scowled. That was the sort of stuff which met his disapproval—three men picking on one who was evidently the butt of their joke and probably defenseless.

The man in the road had by now got his stuff together on a worn blanket, and looked up as if fearful of further torment. Idaho Smith's eyes opened wider; then his lips parted as if he were somewhat astonished. The man in the road was an Indian whose face was seamed with indefinite years; he was probably of advanced age. He shook his fists at the men on the walk and roared a guttural stream of expletives in his native tongue which only provoked further amusement in the ruffians, but increased Idaho Smith's curiosity astonishingly. He walked out into the street and looked down at the old Indian, whose black eyes stared back at him as if apprehensive of further molestation.

"Blackfoot, eh?" Idaho asked. And then it was the Indian's turn to be astonished, as Idaho spoke to him in his own tongue—a language picked up in the years when Smith had called Pocatello his headquarters and had prospected with a Blackfoot as his sole companion for months at a time, or for other periods had lived in a Blackfoot camp.

"You are a moon's sleep from home," he said. "How come?"

"You Indian agent?" the Indian retorted, scowling.

"Humph! Not by a damn' sight," said Idaho emphatically, recalling the numerous occasions when agents had run him off reservations where he hungered to prospect.

They got no further, for at that moment one of three ebullient tormentors who had come up decided to renew the sport; deftly he reached around and with a kick again scattered the ragged pack of rubbish.

Immediately the third surprise of the occasion was sprung. Idaho Smith "packed" a most unexpected punch, for a man nearing his sixties. Likewise it had beautiful precision and the hardness of a mule's hoof. It snapped so hard now against the jaw of the man that the soles of his boots were momentarily visible as he doubled backward and appeared to hit the road head-first. One of his companions promptly sideswiped at the miner and in a moment more had discovered this to be a bad mistake. Smith's fist seemed to be made of concrete. Forty years of handling picks and shovels didn't seem to have softened it at all, although its softening effects on a man's jaw were prodigious.

"You achin' to butt in?" Idaho inquired of the third tormentor, taking a step toward him, his eyes dancing with the opportunity to battle.

The man showed disappointing reluctance. "Then fan your feet out of this!" the miner snapped. The man "fanned" them to the sidewalk and gazed sympathetically at his two companions who were now sitting up in the dust and staring bewilderedly as if seeking to discover what other damage had been done by a cyclone. Not so Idaho Smith. He seemed peculiarly devoid of sympathy. He stepped to the nearest, caught him by the collar, jerked him to his feet and with a kick helped him to a flying start of at least ten feet.

"On your way, son! On your way!" he said cheerfully, as he turned to encourage the remaining joker. The miner looked disappointed when the man scrambled to his feet and ran before he could be assisted.

"Now, Injun," said Idaho, ignoring the retreating ones as if they had never existed, "we'll see if you can gather your stuff without bein' bothered. I'll wait for you."

The Blackfoot hastily got his pack together, tied it with the overalls, and straightened up. Idaho looked surprised at the unraveling. He stood six feet two himself, and observed that the Indian must have, at some time in the long past, been nearly as tall. Older than he had thought, Idaho meditated. Somewhere between seventy or eighty,

and a hundred. Never could be certain about an Indian's age. Looked old when young, sometimes, and then—just kept on looking old until they had a hundred years on Methusaleh! What on earth was an old buck like this doing four or five hundred miles away from his reservation? Funny! First time Idaho had ever seen a Blackfoot in California. Rootdigger Indians now and then, and away down south, some Mojaves, but a Blackfoot— It made him curious.

"You come with me. I'm goin' after white-man's coffee and things to eat," he said in the Indian's tongue. "Hungry?"

"Yes, white friend. Heap hungry," answered the Blackfoot.

"Never knew one that wasn't," Idaho thought. "Always seem to have room for more. But he don't look none too well-fed. Maybe he got lost. . . . . Nope—they never get lost so far away as this. Must be runnin' away from somethin'! Well, he looks hungry, anyhow."

THE restaurant-owner scowled when Idaho entered with his guest trailing stodgily behind him, and rasped: "Hey! We don't feed no bucks in here. They might want to scratch."

"Aint seen no signs of it on him yet," Idaho remarked, turning to look at his companion who stood stolidly waiting, as if the delay was to him a mystery. "But, anyhow—he eats or I don't."

"Suit yourself. I aint hankerin' for no mossback trade, nohow," the restaurant-man growled, turning his back to the counter as if that ended the matter. But it didn't. With one long stride Idaho reached the counter; the proprietor felt a hand on his collar, was jerked around in a grip so powerful it was terrifying, and looked into a pair of hard eyes.

"Mossback, eh? Lift them long, hairy ears of yours and listen! Me and my friend'll eat here—or this place'll be the worst wreck in California, and the worst wrecked thing in it'll be you! Now get busy on two big plates of ham and eggs—and keep your trap closed. You'll get paid for 'em, so you needn't have no heartaches while you're on the job. I don't want to spoil your cookin'."

He released the shivering cook and turned to the Indian with a cheerful sentence in the Blackfoot tongue: "Sit down, uncle. We eat plenty."

"What name you call?" the Indian said, as he put his pack on the floor and slid onto a stool.

Idaho grinned thoughtfully. The question betrayed that this was no common man, but one who preserved dignities of his own.

"Smith," he said, "in pale-face—but back where you come from they called me Red Hunter, because I was always lookin' for gold."

For a moment the black eyes stared at him expressionlessly, then the Blackfoot said with that same dignity: "Me got many names. You may call me the Hawk. It is not good for man to eat with friends when they know not names by which to call. The Hawk forgets no names, or no friends. It is good."

"And this talk shows two things—that you don't forget enemies either, and that most likely you have been a chief," Idaho thought, sitting with a watchful eye on the discomfited restaurant-man who was making haste as if to rid his place of such unwelcome guests. "No common Injun would have so much pride," Idaho continued his meditation. "Old-time sort, this one—warrior kind. Must be old. Not many of 'em left." And a few minutes later, watching the starved way in which the Hawk ate his food, he added to his mental appraisement: "Travelin' on a lean belly, too. Eats like a hungry wolf, poor old cuss!"

He threw money for payment contemptuously on the counter when the meal was finished and trudged out, with the Hawk at his heels. The Hawk was still two paces behind when he entered Peabody's and said: "I'll be here with my burro to get my outfit in the mornin', Sam. But couldn't you have a man here about five o'clock? I got a mighty long way to go back up into the hills."

"Sure, Idaho," Peabody obliged. "Yes, sir, I reckon you picked out the lonesomest and farthest-away spot on earth for yourself! Aint doin' much either, are you?"

"No, not much. Day wages, is about all," Idaho drawled. "But you see it's about the only place in this part of California that wasn't worked to the bone by the old-timers. I might hit somethin' worth while up there yet."

"Never knew a prospector yet that didn't think he'd find it—just a little farther on," Peabody said dryly. "And, by the way, heard you had a run-in with the Calder gang today. You want to look out for them. They're bad medicine. They come back here after being away five-six months, and after the town thought they had shed 'em. Mighty mysterious where they get money. Never been known to work, traipse off when they get broke, then come back and throw it around."

"Thought those three roughnecks was from the sawmills," Idaho remarked, scowling.

"Humph! No work in them. And there's five of 'em when they're together. If they'd been expectin' trouble, you'd have had a gun-play. Seems as if they weren't heeled. But if I was you, the next time I came to camp I'd have a gun handy. They'll find an excuse to gang you—after the way you handled Tobe and Bill."

"Oh, they'll have a couple of months' wait before I'm back here again," Idaho growled. "By that time they'll either be gone, or've forget it."

"Don't be too sure about their forgetting," Peabody said. Then for the first time he paid attention to the Indian. His manner was that of the old-time trader who waited on an Indian last of all.

"What do you want?" he asked; but the miner answered:

"He came in with me. Reckon he's busted. Give him ten pounds of bacon and about the same of beans and, well, say about ten pounds of flour and a tin of baking-powder, and some salt—and charge it to me. That's about all an old chap like him could carry, I guess. Better give it to him now. Put 'em in a gunny-bag so he can make a pack of 'em."

While the storekeeper bustled about, the miner turned to the Blackfoot and in that tongue said: "I have bought your grub. Not good for man to travel without it. You are many sleeps from your land. Better go back. Good luck, Hawk. Good-by. The man that trades will give you your stuff. Wait and get it."

Then, leaving the Hawk standing patiently, but not even expressing gratitude, Idaho trudged away, intent upon his other camp business.

HE had forgotten the Indian when, just as the sun promised to show over the rugged eastern escarpment of mountain and forest, he approached Peabody's store, followed by a fat, ancient burro whose air of resignation told of many varied trails. He paused and gave a grunt. Curled up on a worn bench under the wooden awning he saw the Hawk, peacefully asleep with the bag of supplies under his head and his ragged pack blanket spread over him. At the sound of the miner's boots on the planks and the sudden opening of the door by a yawning clerk, the Hawk sat up, wide awake, and said in his guttural tongue, "Me wait here, friend, for to go. We start now?"

"Start? *We* start?" Idaho blurted. "Didn't know you were goin' with me! Thought I told you better for you go back to your own people."

"You all the people the Hawk got, now," the Indian said, stolidly shaking his head. "So—go with you."

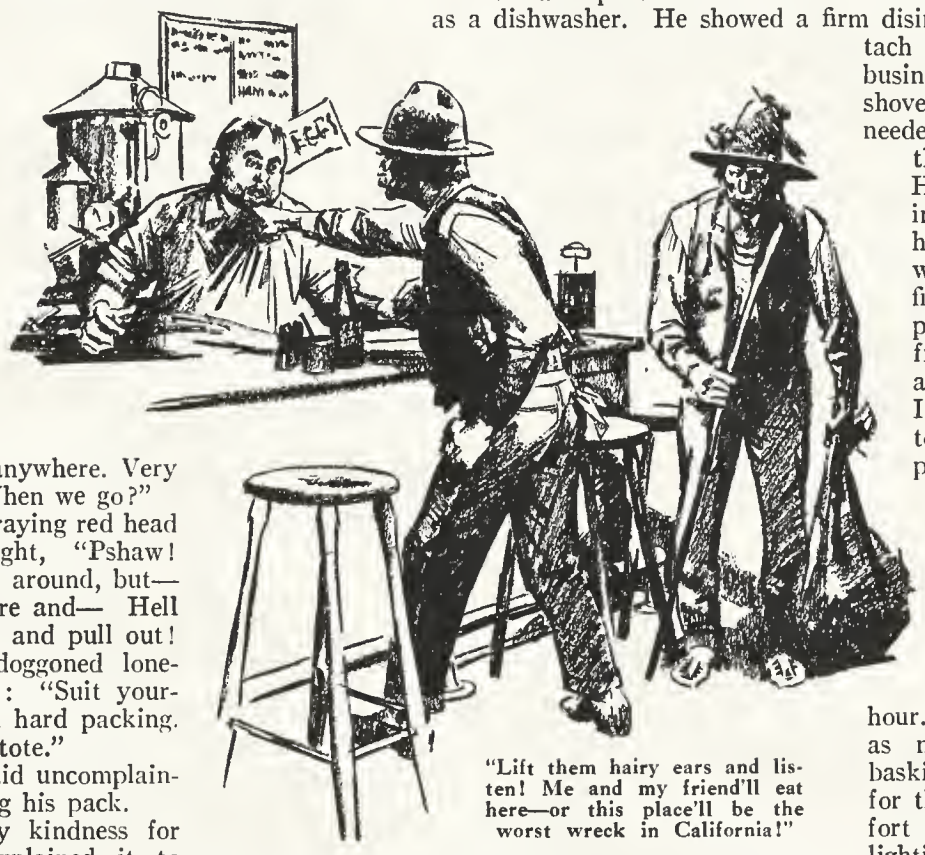
"But—but—what for? I got no work for you!" Idaho objected.

"Game—fish—this place where you live?" the Hawk demanded, with the first sound of pleading Idaho had heard in his voice. It melted the miner a little; then he saw the same look of entreaty in the black eyes and at last said, hesitantly, "Yes, deer; and sometimes brown bear — and streams full of trout; but—"

"All right. That good place for me," the Indian hastily interrupted. Then, as if to add to his plea: "The Hawk no bother his friend, Red Hunter. Can make wickiup anywhere. Very good to have friend. When we go?"

Idaho scratched his graying red head perplexedly and thought, "Pshaw! Don't want him hangin' around, but—it's free country up there and— Hell—he'll soon get restless and pull out! Besides, he looks so doggoned lonesome!" Aloud he said: "Suit yourself. But you'll find it hard packing. I got all my burro can tote."

"Good," the Hawk said uncomplainingly, and began making his pack.



"Lift them hairy ears and listen! Me and my friend'll eat here—or this place'll be the worst wreck in California!"

Idaho disclaimed any kindness for what followed. He explained it to Peabody later by saying: "Well, Sam, you see I forget some more stuff I need, and that burro of mine, Pete, is gettin' old—an' so I just bought that burro and loaded that old buck's stuff aboard along with mine, not havin' another full burro-load of my own. I thought Pete'd like company up there in the back hills, anyhow. I reckon burros do get lonesome sometimes with no other jackass to talk to, same as us."

The sun was well up, when the two burros daintily hoofing the road ahead, and some ten paces in the rear, a tall, bent old Indian following him, Idaho Smith "hit the trail." It led on and on, high and higher, then was left as the cavalcade crossed a ridge and made camp. Throughout the day there had not been a dozen sentences of conversation. Idaho made a friendly attempt now and then, but was finally discouraged by the Hawk's monosyllables. "He aint goin' to talk me to death, that's a cinch," the miner thought after his final attempt.

"We got started so late we can't get through today, because we got about twenty miles more before we come to my camp," he explained to the Indian, while they ate their supper. Gravely regarding the embers, the Hawk said: "What matter where men like you and the Hawk sleep, Red Hunter? We know the stars."

The miner looked at him curiously after that. He had not expected any such sentiment from a palpably tired old man who had trudged silently and uncomplainingly at his heels all day. It worded something which in his own long and wide-wandering life he had thought but never formulated. Perhaps the old chap wouldn't be a nuisance around the cabin, after all. Must think it over. And he was still thinking when sleep overtook him.

Long afterward he explained to Sam Peabody: "When we come to my cabin I let him in, because you see it was rainin'—one of them mountain showers—and the old feller was wet an' tired, an' so I just says 'come in' and he come, an' after that I didn't know how to get shed of him, so— Well, he just stayed, and I got used to him."

The Hawk proved worthless as a cook. He was worse as a dishwasher. He showed a firm disinclination to attach himself to the business-end of a shovel, and he wasn't needed in cleaning up the sluice-boxes. He would get up in the morning, hack off enough wood to start a fire, and bring a pail of water from the spring; and then while Idaho trudged off to work his poor-paying claim, the Hawk would squat down on the ground on the sunny side of the cabin and doze, or meditate, by the hour. He would sit as motionless as a basking lizard, save for the occasional effort of filling and lighting a dirty, long-stemmed pipe. At times even the effort of having to pull on it to smoke seemed too much. After he had watched Idaho cook the noon meal and wash the tin plates, he would also watch him go back to work, with a stolid or sometimes cynical flicker in his eyes; then he would get up, stretch himself and disappear, over one hill or over another. Sometimes in this restlessness he wandered far and did not return until late; but always he brought fish or game, with total disregard for the open or closed season. When his moccasins wore out, he grunted laboriously over making new ones, and muttered, "Squaw work. Me no like. Ugh!"

Occasionally he took to roaming nights, but his movements were so light and noiseless despite his great age that Idaho slept undisturbed, or if aroused by his return would chuckle and think: "Old cuss's gettin' restless. Just like a wild animal. Poor old codger! Most likely slips around and listens to wild things, and the wind sighin' in trees, and smells all sorts of scents that make him homesick. Just don't know what I'm goin' to do about him!"

Once in midsummer Idaho made a trip to Summit for fresh supplies, but the Hawk did not accompany him.

"I go if I can help my white brother," he said. "If I can't help, stay here. Too much walking no good any more. Make heap tired. Stay here watch cabin, fish a little, eat and sleep a lot. Very old. Like heap rest, now."

Idaho looked back from the edge of the forest on the

mountainside. He was rather touched that the Hawk was watching him from sight. He waved his hand, but the old man merely acknowledged it with a gesture.

In the camp Idaho jeered at himself for making numerous purchases for the Hawk's comfort.

"Must be taking out more gold, Idaho," Sam Peabody remarked.

"No, Sam," was his drawling reply, "she aint any better. Just good day wages—and even that a little slimmer; but somehow that pore old cuss makes me feel sort of sorry for him all the time, an' it don't cost much to make the old feller happy. Another thing—think I'll buy him a new rifle. Injuns are funny that way. Like to feel they own something. He never says nothin', but I know how he feels."

"Not a bad idea for you to have one around handy, anyhow," the storekeeper said, in such a way that Idaho's eyes opened a trifle and he said inquiringly, "Meanin'—"

"Meaning that all the Calder gang is back. And they got it in for you, Idaho. Steer clear of 'em."

"Huh! I'm not runnin' none, an' I aint huntin' trouble. But— Sho! They aint knowin' where to find my camp, an' if they did, they're too damn' lazy to walk more'n thirty mile."

He could not have told why, when with his tired burros ahead of him he came down through the lace-work of shadows cast by the tall trees in the moonlight and saw the roof of his cabin, he forgot his own leg-weariness and felt an anticipatory pleasure.

"Feel like I was Santy Claus bringin' things for a kid!" he thought. Then he grinned at the additional thought, "Only trouble with this kid is he's old enough to be my gran'dad. Sort of a ninety-year-old kid!"

At the sound of the burros' tiny hoofs rattling over the declivities of the hillside trail, a shadow appeared in the light of the doorway, stood like a glistening statue, seemed to identify the sounds, and slowly came forward. "The Hawk is glad his brother has returned," he welcomed Idaho simply—and said but little more when inside the homely lighted cabin he examined the gifts. But words were unnecessary. Idaho twinkled at the caress he gave the new rifle, at his swinging of it upward to test its balance, and of his question, "How far shoot, Red Hunter?"

About a mile, I reckon," Idaho said, and evoked a long-drawn whistle of amazement. The Hawk was gone with it before Idaho awoke, and when he returned, late at night he came staggering in under a haunch of venison—tired but exultant.

"Heap good iron," he said in English, as if to honor the occasion. "Shoot like hell." Undoubtedly he was happy.

So was Idaho, but it seemed as if that had been fated as the turning-point in their quiet life in that secluded valley; a turning-point, for the reason that the next clean-up of the string of sluice-boxes caused the patient Idaho to frown and look troubled when he weighed his gold. The Hawk happened to be in and gravely watched him. Idaho shook his head lugubriously as he silently arose and put the little clean-up in a baking-powder tin taken from its hiding-place beneath his bunk. Then he rolled a cigarette which did not seem to bring comfort.

"My brother is troubled," said the Hawk quietly. "The gold is not so much."

"No, Hawk, I'm afraid it is getting lean. Don't like it. If it doesn't get better— Humph! I'll have to leave here. Start all over again."

The Hawk said nothing, made no sign to show that such a departure would be to him the ultimate tragedy, or that in his heart had come the hope that all his last days might be passed there in that same gentle placidity and undisturbed quietude of forest, stream and mountain. In the days following Idaho would have noticed that the Hawk seemed more restless; he seldom basked by the cabin wall; he seemed wandering every hour of the day as if to bid farewell to the country he had come to love, and sometimes in the night he would again disappear, to be gone for hours. Idaho might have noticed that, despite his own perturbation, had not something happened entirely new to his vast experience. When next he cleaned up his sluices he at first stopped work—bent over and stared as if unbelieving, then rubbed his eyes and winked them and finally blurted aloud: "Well, who'd 'a' thought it! Lord, I must be gettin' old! Shoveled coarse gold into the boxes and never saw it—and— Great Scott! Here's one piece that'll weigh most an ounce and I never seen her shine!"

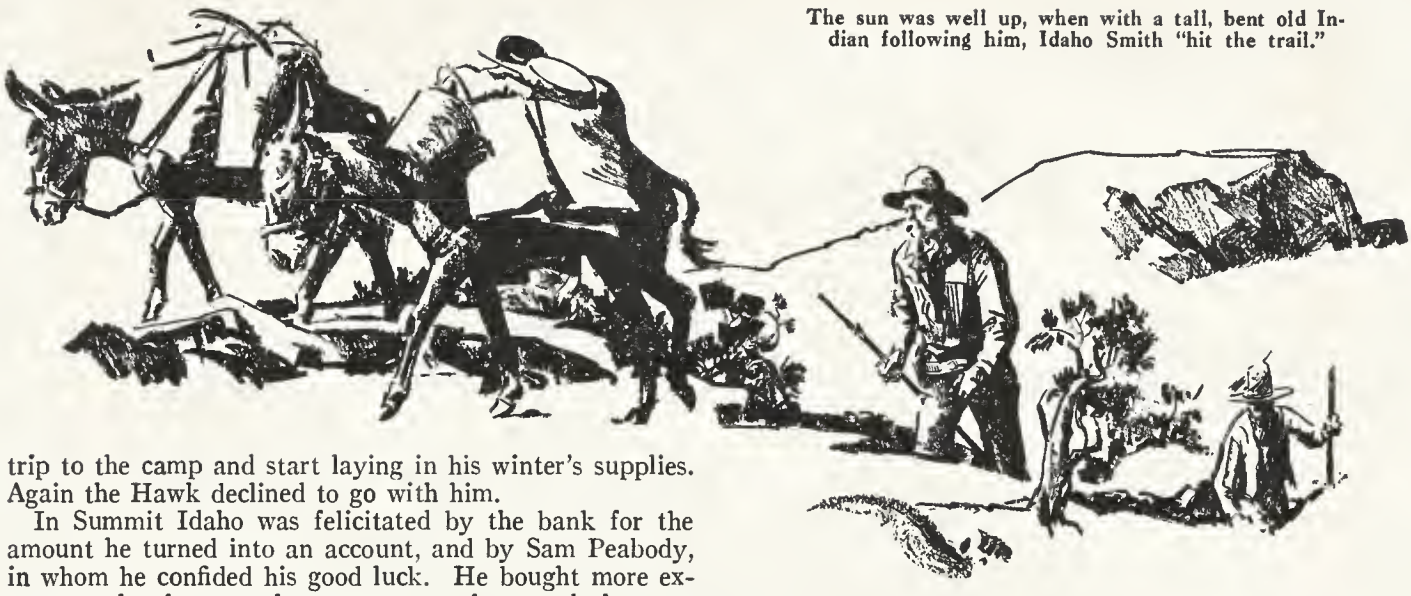
It was late in the dusk of the summer's day, but he went back and examined the face from which he had been shoveling, and took a pan or two to the stream. But he found nothing save the usual lean feathering of fine colors. He sat down and pondered this; finally he concluded that he must have struck a pocket on the bedrock somewhere that had momentarily and generously increased his yield. But it was big enough to elate him, and bring hope of others. The richest clean-up he had known in years!

The Hawk was waiting in the cabin when Idaho came, jubilantly carrying his gold in the gold pan to exclaim boisterously, in English, forgetting the Indian tongue, "Hey, old Socks! Maybe we won't have to leave here after all. I reckon she must have rich spots, because I got one. Look at *that!*" And he thrust the pan forward for the Hawk to see. But the latter sat immovable and expressionless, as if not at all interested. "Umph!" he grunted and when Idaho, thinking his protégé had not grasped his meaning, broke into Blackfoot, he again said merely "Umph!" and stolidly lighted his pipe.

"Damn it, man, aint you glad?" Idaho insisted, and when the old brave said nothing added, good-naturedly, "But of course you are. Only you got no way of showin' it, I reckon."

In the following week Idaho went through all the fever that a prospector, be he ever so old to the work, never escapes, the optimistic hope that he has at last found riches. But the ground did not yield quick fortune. It baffled him. Despite his care, his constant panning, his scrutiny, he could not discern any change. Yet each time he trickled the water through his sluices and lifted his riffles, he found that it had paid beyond expectations. Better than he had dared hope—enough to prove profitable. Time and again he would scratch his head and mutter, "Just can't see why I missed it. Must be small, rich pockets of coarse stuff. Must be gettin' old, not to know when I'm shovelin' it in!"

As autumn approached he decided he must make another



The sun was well up, when with a tall, bent old Indian following him, Idaho Smith "hit the trail."

trip to the camp and start laying in his winter's supplies. Again the Hawk declined to go with him.

In Summit Idaho was felicitated by the bank for the amount he turned into an account, and by Sam Peabody, in whom he confided his good luck. He bought more extravagantly than usual, spent money here and there on what for him were luxuries: a phonograph; a clock with chimes that amused him; a hanging lamp, and—wonder of riches!—a gaudy piece of carpet. He bought everything he could think of that the Hawk might need, reflecting: "The old cuss is my mascot and'll sure want warm clothes if he's goin' to keep on prowlin' when the nights are chilly. I'd get him a harmonica or a jew's-harp if I thought he wouldn't play on it all the time. Reckon I'd better not."

He left the camp before the gossip got about that he must have found rich ground to be able to buy such luxuries. But men wondered, and resolved quietly to trail him to his seclusion when next he visited the camp. They exaggerated the amounts he must have brought, until hundreds became thousands; but in the meantime he had vanished, hopefully looking forward to his homecoming, frequently thinking: "How tickled that old cuss'll be when he sees all this new stuff;" or, "Bet I get more'n a grunt outen him *this* trip!"

But he was robbed of that pleasure, for he found the Hawk an ill man. He was in his bed, half delirious with a fever, and now the prospector's solicitude betrayed an affection Idaho had concealed even from himself. From his little supply of camp remedies he was able to break the fever, but his patient was too old to recover quickly. Idaho rigged up a rest for him in the sunshine by the cabin wall, led him out to it each day before going to work, came at intervals to see if he could do anything, or to help him inside when the sun faded. He could not understand the Hawk's unusual restlessness, his new brooding, his shadowed eyes. "Afraid he thinks the happy huntin'-ground aint many sleeps off for him now," Idaho ruminated.

And now he had another worry. He struck into lean ground again, and his clean-up showed less than the old "day wages." He sat around the cabin in the evening, beginning to despond, while the Hawk would say softly in his picturesque tongue: "My brother is sad. My brother must not give up. A warrior fights to the last."

Then one day the Hawk, although still weak, feebly rambled out again and when he returned and was roughly chided by Idaho, muttered: "It is the full moon. The Hawk has not many more under which to wander in the singing night. I would go—" A heavy spell of coughing broke his sentence, that cough which had followed his illness. It troubled Idaho, who reflected that if the Hawk got no better, whether he wished to go or not, he must be taken to the camp doctor. On the next day he saw something else that touched him. Plainly imprinted in a patch of wet sand, as if he had stepped from the stream to the sluice-boxes, was the mark of the Hawk's moccasined foot. So he too had been troubled by the failure of the ground! Probably, Idaho thought, he had been there working some of his Indian magic—praying to his wild gods to come back with kindly favor, and not turn away angry or careless faces.

"Mebbe he'll bring the luck back," Idaho soliloquized, and oddly enough, it seemed that he did; for in the next clean-up the riffles again held richness, of even coarser gold than had yet been taken. But the Hawk was ill for a week afterward, and his body seemed to shrivel and rack with the cough. There was another lean week when the claim produced scarcely anything, in turn followed by a rich one when the Hawk went out into the night to, as he said, "Make medicine to his gods."

Then the Hawk, despite his feebleness, took to forcing himself outward each day, insistent that they must have game.

"Catch fish. You're too weak to tote your rifle," Idaho insisted. "Here! If you must pack a gun take my old revolver. It'll kill a buck—if you get close enough."

And he grinned when thereafter the Hawk wore the pistol as he slowly and heavily started away to disappear in the edge of the forest, like a decrepit shadow that could not forsake its haunts. At night, the Hawk would come wearily in with lagging steps, squat on the edge of his bunk if the meal was not prepared, or lower himself into his waiting chair if his food had been left on the stove to keep warm. Two or three times he did not return until so late that Idaho, annoyed, had crawled into his bunk. Such late returns would find the old warrior spent on the following day, grunting with pains, coughing until his body seemed in danger of disintegrating.

"Hawk, you got no business bein' out nights, with that bark of yours," Idaho warned one morning as he was leaving the cabin. "You're too old."

"Um-m-mh! Mebbe," was all the answer he got; and later, looking up from a face of gravel into which he was picking, he saw the old man slowly walking up the hillside, bent, seeming to stagger under the weight of a fishing-pole, but as usual armed with the heavy pistol swaying from a belt at his hip as if it were part of his clothing. Idaho shook his head sadly, then resumed work and thought of other things. He made his hasty noontime meal. The Hawk had not returned. He was not in the cabin when at dusk Idaho sauntered through the door into

the dark interior. . . . Then the cabin roof seemed to fall upon him, crushing out all knowledge of immediate needs, blotting even that fading outside dusk into blackness.

When he came back to life he moved stiffly, dazed and wondering what had happened, why his limbs felt restrained, why his head throbbed, who had lighted the swinging lamp above the table. The twittering of night birds which had nested in the tree outside the cabin door sounded distant, strange. He blinked his eyes, turned his head and heard an unfamiliar voice: "He's comin' to. Good thing you didn't crack his nut, Bill. We aint found his cache; all we got is this baking-powder can from under his bunk. Most likely his last clean-up. Throw a drink in him and prod him up."

His awakening senses told him that there were four men in the room. He tried to sit up, but subsided when he found that he was bound securely to the rough side-supports of his bunk. A man came over to him and forced a bottle between his lips. As he swallowed two or three times his mind cleared still further, until he recognized, bending above him, a remembered face—one that he had last seen when, on the street in Summit, he had struck it. One of the Calder gang! It sharpened his sense of peril. Dangerous! Somehow they had found him. Then words betrayed that they believed him to have gold. They must have been lying in wait inside his cabin door to strike him down when he entered. He turned his head away and shut his teeth with anger and chagrin. To be flattened out like this by a gang of thugs, without a chance to put up a fight!

The peculiar deliberation of their movements next impressed him. While three of them continued their search for hidden treasure, the fourth calmly prepared a meal. Surely they must have surmised that he was not the only occupant of the cabin, for they had scattered the contents of the Hawk's bunk in their quest. Equally certain it was that they apprehended no outside interference. Bitter dismay for a moment overwhelmed him, fear that the poor old exile had been their first victim. He lifted his head and peered around the cabin floor. But if they had captured or murdered the Hawk there was no trace of him inside.

His fears for the Hawk diminished when the four men sat down to eat, and a fifth came to the door, growling, "No use in my watchin' outside any longer, is there? Feller'd been back long before this, wouldn't he, if he was comin' at all?"

The man called Bill, evidently the leader, snarled: "Thinkin' of your belly, as usual, are you, Ike? Well, you just mosey back out and keep watch until one of us gets grubbed. We aint takin' no chances."

Grumbling, Ike disappeared and Idaho's alarm was now concentrated on what might happen to the old Indian, rather than on his own plight. He considered pleading for the absent Hawk; telling them that he was nothing more than an ill and weary old man whom it would gain them nothing to harm. Then he realized that perhaps in such ruthless hands his sole hope of succor rested in the Hawk—and he kept silent. The Hawk probably would not return until they had done their worst and gone. And feeble as he otherwise was, the Hawk's eyes were as keen and alert as an eagle's. Surely, if he came, though unsuspecting, he would discover something amiss before falling into the clutches of a watchman who was not even convinced of his existence.

The men at the table talked as if whatever they said mattered nothing to their prisoner. They discussed the fortune he was supposed to have gathered and hidden. They even joked about some previous exploit in a way that made Idaho chill, an episode in which some hapless victim had, "Squawked when he felt the hot iron." Idaho grimly listened, and his increased knowledge of their brutality did not add to his comfort. "Squawk?" He had nothing to squawk about—but what they might do to him before they were convinced of that was appalling.

One of the men got up and went outside. The man called Ike came in and sat down to eat. "Not a sound; nobody within a day's travel from here! Why not get through with this job and beat it? Full moon's as good as daylight for a get-away!"

"You finish your chow and get back outside," Bill yelled, annoyedly. "And no sleepin' on the job, either!"

Ike ate sullenly while the others proceeded to wreck the cabin in their search. Idaho shut his teeth when his prized chime clock came clattering to the floor and was kicked open, and when the box of the phonograph was smashed. He continued to say nothing when he was loosened from his bunk, jerked across the room and tied to a stanchion, after which his own bunk was ripped apart.

There was a sharp pause when, having failed to find any secret hiding-place, the leader came across and stood in front of him, the other three closing in with ominous attention.

"Well, we aint found your stuff," Bill said. "So now you'll talk. Where you got it hid?"

"If you found that can under my bunk you got all there is, and—" Idaho began, but was silenced by a swinging smash across his lips that cut them against his teeth.

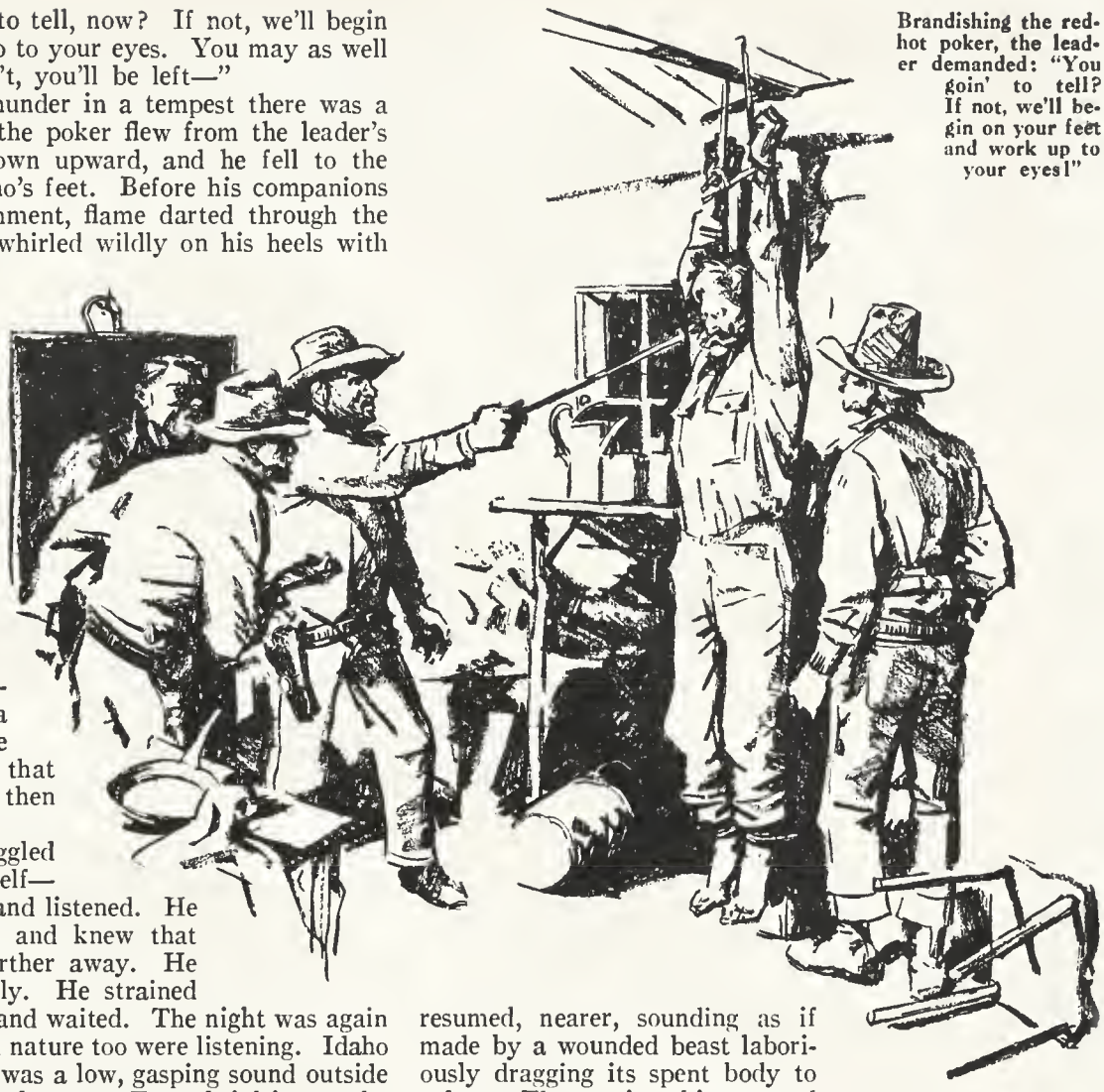
"That's just a taste of what you get if you don't show us," Bill shouted menacingly.

"Can't tell you where it is when there aint none, can I?" Idaho demanded, and was given another blow that rocked his head and made him see stars. His reiterations of the truth brought such punishment that he finally lost consciousness until revived by water dashed over his head. Through half-closed eyes he stared about the room and out into the peaceful, moonlit night. Then he saw that a man was heating the poker in the stove. Three men seized him and despite his resistance tied his hands to the rafters above, where he hung suspended; then they jerked the boots and socks from his feet, and their leader drew the red-hot poker from the stove and brandishing it in Idaho's face until he felt its searing heat in his eyes,

The Hawk was gone with the new rifle before Idaho awoke.

demanded: "You goin' to tell, now? If not, we'll begin on your feet and work up to your eyes. You may as well come across—if you don't, you'll be left—"

Sharp as a crash of thunder in a tempest there was a near-by roaring report; the poker flew from the leader's hands as they were thrown upward, and he fell to the floor, sprawled near Idaho's feet. Before his companions could gasp their astonishment, flame darted through the window—a second man whirled wildly on his heels with hands out-thrown and clutching, then fell to a crumpled heap. At the first shot the man nearest the door sprang toward it, and before the echoes of the second shot had died was running through it with the remaining man close upon his heels. A wild yell that Idaho recognized as the Blackfoot war-whoop ululated in the night outside. Now there was a fusillade of shots, the oaths of the torturers and that weird wail intermingled; then came a spell of silence.



Brandishing the red-hot poker, the leader demanded: "You goin' to tell? If not, we'll begin on your feet and work up to your eyes!"

Idaho twisted and wriggled vainly to liberate himself—then, exhausted, paused and listened. He heard shots at intervals and knew that they were constantly farther away. He heard the last one faintly. He strained his ears, held his breath, and waited. The night was again profoundly silent, as if all nature too were listening. Idaho became aware that there was a low, gasping sound outside the cabin door, then a final moan. For a brief instant he agonized in the thought that this was perhaps the death-gasp of that valiant old warrior who had come to his rescue—then reasoned that this could not be, for otherwise the battle would have ended. This reassurance was succeeded by the fear that in his hot and savage pursuit of the fugitives that final shot had found the Hawk's life.

The agonies of Idaho's limbs and bruises were forgotten in the anguish of fear for the safety of that silent derelict whom he had befriended and had come to regard with affection. He must get loose, somehow—must go to the Hawk's assistance.

Idaho struggled desperately, writhing, twisting, straining until his forehead was wet with sweat, his eyes blinded, his arms almost dislocated by his vain efforts. The pain increased. Now and then he paused to rest and, panting, stared at the upturned dead face near his feet, with its widely opened eyes and that single scarlet spot in the exact center of the forehead—or at the other body that lay crumpled on the wreckage of the clock that could chime no more. Then he renewed his frenzied efforts to free himself. Time after time he tried, his struggles growing weaker until at last he hung in lethargic torment, his battered chin upon his broad breast, wondering dumbly how long it would take him to die suspended helplessly there alone.

It seemed to him that it was ages later—the dawn must not be far distant—soon the birds would begin twittering in the big trees outside—when he heard strange, laborious sounds. At first he thought they must be the rush of blood in his ears. Then, as if leaping across a chasm of silence, he heard them again. For a time they ceased, then were resumed, nearer, sounding as if made by a wounded beast laboriously dragging its spent body to refuge. The moving thing neared the door now; Idaho twisted his head to look through the opening, and saw it crawling into the square of fading moonlight, creeping forward on hands and knees, halting, then indomitably renewing its advance. It was the Hawk, dragging a useless leg, rising and falling, moving now but a foot at a time.

"Hawk! Hawk! My God—they got you too!" Idaho croaked through his broken lips.

"Yes, my brother, but—I have come home," came a reply scarcely above a tormented whisper. "Come for—cut you down. Patience—patience—a moment—" Then creeping hands caught the stanchion behind and slowly, heavily, lifted the broken body upward. There was a long pause, as if the effort had been exhausting; then Idaho felt the flick of cold steel grazing the broken skin of his tortured ankles, and the bindings fell away. He heard the hands climbing again. . . . a grunt of triumph. He felt the slash of a knife above, then one arm swung free and his numbed toes touched the floor just as the other wrist was cut loose, and he fell in a heap—barely twisting himself aside from the dead man at his feet. He heard the clatter of the discarded knife, the long sigh of one whose work is done, and the soft slithering of the Hawk's body as he too sagged downward.

"Hawk! Hawk!" Idaho cried; but he got no response. He succeeded in getting to his knees as the blood slowly returned to his numbed limbs—crawled to where a half-emptied bottle of brandy rolled drunkenly on its side—crept back, and started to trickle it between the Hawk's parted lips.

"Lord! Mustn't do that! Start him to stranglin', with that cough of his," he muttered, and with an effort he reached his feet and staggered to the water-barrel by the stove, where he snatched one fevered gulp, then diluted some of the stimulant in the tin cup. He turned back to the Hawk, lifted him, and held the cup to his lips. At last the Hawk's eyes opened slowly and stared upward. He reached trembling hands to the cup, seized and drained it. Idaho saw that the hands were lacerated and torn as if they had crawled over sharp rocks for long distances. He swore fervently, in sympathy, but was stilled by the Hawk:

"Waste not my time, brother, for it is short. Soon I go. Waste not, but heed. They who we first saw in that camp beyond the hills are all dead. One who watched lies out behind the cabin, where my knife reached his heart. Two are here with us. Another died outside our door. He wounded me as they came out, but I followed that last one. He shot well. Three times, in the moonlight, he hit me before my bullet took his life. He lies in the brush beside the trail nearly a mile away. Dead—all dead—killed by one they made look foolish, an old man they kicked in a street, until his great white brother came and saved his dignity. The Hawk did not forget. It is well."

"Wait! Wait to tell more, till I fix your bunk and see where you're hurt," Idaho implored. But the Hawk slowly shook his head.

"No. No good. Plenty hurt. Soon go. More drink. Must have time say more," he insisted; so easing him back to the floor, Idaho diluted the remainder of the brandy, again lifted him to a sitting position and held it to his lips. Too weak now to hold the cup, he seemed fighting tenaciously to prolong his life for but a little longer.

"Brother," he muttered, "brother, maybe I did wrong to deceive you. But I did not want to leave here,—my last home,—or you. I was afraid when the gold ran dry; but I had found a place where there is plenty. I worked it out and at nights put just a little—not too much—in your long boxes. Just enough make you happy—keep you here. But I did not tell you because I was afraid if you found other place it would mean many things. Maybe other miners come—spoil our place. Maybe so much gold make you forget the Hawk, or make you different. Make you too busy for care same way for very old man who left his people because they had grown dirty, lazy—beggars on what you call Reservation—when once all land-free—all belong my tribe. Ugh! You only white man ever called 'brother' by the Hawk. And that not my real name. Big Chief once—my own name, which no matter now. Listen! You know big tree which way I go every morning? Pass it. Across valley toward sunrise. Down into next valley. Long way—maybe what you call two mile up, you find where I get gold. Plenty there. Too much. Big chunks under rock where you find old shovel. Yours!"

His voice had died away almost to a whisper, but when Idaho tried to lift him higher he seemed to gather his final strength and muttered: "My brother knows way fit warrior my tribe go to Great Spirit; how must scatter water, food, to four ways of the wind that Great Spirit may know warrior is on the way, is coming. You know way sing death song for warrior who died in battle. Sing it over my grave—up under big tree—sing it bravely—for Hawk—who very far from own people—who very tired—and—"

The rough, heavy hands of Idaho Smith were strangely tender as he gently rested the body of the exile on the floor and as he knelt beside it, sorrowing, it seemed to him fitting that through the dawn from that great outside where the wanderer could never again roam, the birds began their awakening as if singing a requiem for one whose spirit had again found unlimited freedom, and whose valiant spirit had shifted him onward to a final reward.

The Mills of God

The Black Handkerchief

A fact detective story

By GEORGE BARTON

THIS is the story of how a black silk handkerchief with red stripes proved one of the clues which led to the identification of a murdered man and eventually to the arrest of another who was convicted of slaying him.

The case itself was sordid enough; but it gained world-wide prominence because of some of its mysterious angles, and particularly because it fixed permanently the reputation of Frederick Wensley as one of the wold's greatest detectives.

As these lines are being written, Wensley has just retired as Chief Constable of Scotland Yard, to make way for John Ashley, whose fame promises to be as great as that of his former chief. Wensley had been a detective for forty-two years when he quit the service in order to spend the remaining years of his life in cultivating his garden. One thing said about this man was that he looked more like the detective of fiction than any of his associates. He was thin, had hawklike features, and was as hungry for a clue as a dog is for a bone.

Two of his assistants resembled him in his methods, though they differed from him in appearance: Alfred Ward was as brave as a lion and as tenacious as a bull-dog. The help he gave Wensley in the case we are about to discuss was invaluable. John Ashley made himself famous by what was called "laundry-mark lore." One who knew him well said: "His acquaintance with laundry-marks is vast and intricate. To him they are as easy to read as the identification-tags which soldiers carried during the war. To him every laundry in the land is an unofficial branch of Scotland Yard, putting nice little tags on all the people he may want to meet later. To him a shirt is as easy to read as a book, and a sock is as good as a letter."

These, then, were the three men who were waiting at Scotland Yard when the news was flashed that the dead body of a man had been found one New Year's morning on Clapham Common. A glance at the prostrate form was sufficient to tell the police that the unknown person had been cruelly murdered. He had been beaten over the head with some heavy instrument, and stabbed in the chest. Over his face was a black silk handkerchief with red stripes running through it. When this was removed, the police made an amazing discovery. There were knife-marks on each cheek, and they formed the letter "*S*." The body had evidently been dragged from the walk and hidden behind a clump of bushes. There was a notebook near by containing a list of names, but the authorities were never

Illustrated by Page Trotter

Morrison attempted to make a fight, but the three strangers jumped up and helped the newcomer.

able to connect this with the crime. It might have been dropped by anyone who happened to be in the park. At all events it was valueless, but it was given much attention at the time because the police cannot afford to ignore a possible clue. In addition to this they found a paper bag which might have been used for carrying sandwiches.

The body was photographed, and casts were made of the footprints in the vicinity of the corpse. The address on the paper bag was that of a baker in Whitechapel. Detective Alfred Ward was sent there at once, but the baker was unable to shed any light upon the previous owner of the bag, who had probably been one of his customers. But the police felt they had made some headway; the location of the bakery indicated that the victim was a resident of Whitechapel. Chief Constable Wensley directed that Whitechapel be scoured in the hope of finding some one who might have known the deceased. In less than twenty-four hours it was proved that the murdered man was Leon Beron, a Russian Jew who had come to England with his three brothers a few years before.

In the meantime Wensley directed that inquiries be made at every laundry in London concerning the black silk handkerchief with the red stripes. The detectives had a "hunch" that this bit of evidence would eventually be the means of convicting the murderer. It was not an easy task. One Chinaman looked at his questioner with wide-open mouth:

"How can tell if handkerchief ever washee here? We have thousand piecee all size, all shape, all color. No can tell."

This instance is cited because it was typical of so many of the answers. But difficulties did not deter the searchers. If the laundryman said he could not remember, he was told to think until he was able to.

London was honeycombed with secret societies made up of undesirable men from all parts of the world. In the beginning it was thought that Leon Beron was a victim of some Russian organization which had marked him for death. The letter "S" which was cut on his cheeks gave color to this notion. An anarchist club had headquarters in a crazy-looking dwelling near where Beron lived. He was reputed to be a member of this shady combination of radicals. Some weird tales were told of men who had belonged to similar bodies in Russia during the days of the czars. It was claimed that they drew lots to decide who should commit crimes in the glorious cause of liberty. What could be more natural than that Beron should have been the victim of some such gang of revolutionary plotters? The police ran out this phase of the Clapham Common murder with unusual care, but—they were unable to find anything to prove that Beron had been the victim of anarchists. So that theory was discarded.

While the investigation was in progress, a brother of Leon Beron called at Scotland Yard to inform the authorities that the man had undoubtedly been robbed. This brother said he had met Leon on the day before the murder, and that he had thirty pounds in money and a gold watch and chain. When the body was found, there was just one penny in his pocket. The robbery theory was now accepted, and further work was based on that assumption.

One of the questions the police asked themselves was why Beron was so far from his home in Whitechapel. What was he doing on Clapham Common, and how did he get there? It was presumed he had used a cab; and with that idea in mind, the detectives combed the district for the purpose of finding a cab-driver who had driven him to his fare. They succeeded sooner than they expected. Detective Ward in the course of his search came across a philosophical cabby who had a number of wise sayings. One of them was, "Do not risk your fortune on the single cast of a die."

"Where did you hear that?" asked Ward.

"I never heard it," was the grinning response. "I read it in a book."

"But what do you mean?"

"Nothing, except that sometimes my customers get into trouble."

All of this was said with a cockney accent that made it highly amusing. But as a result of the conversation Ward learned that the cabman had picked up two men at Sidney Street on the morning in question and carried them to the neighborhood of Clapham Common. It must have been at two o'clock, which the philosopher-cabman admitted was no hour for a law-abiding citizen to be abroad. He was able to give a description of his two passengers. One was tall and the other was short. He was taken to view the body.

He was positive the dead man was one of the two passengers he had carried to Clapham. He was thanked and dismissed. Then there was another examination of the body, and it was determined from the position of the wounds that they had been inflicted by a left-handed man. That was something. It set the police on the hunt for a left-handed crook.

Within twenty-four hours they had located a burglar

named Morris Stein who was left-handed.

They did not attempt to arrest Stein, but kept a watch on him in case of need. They looked up his record, and it was not very savory. Among other things they learned he had been in the company of a man who answered to the description of Leon Beron.

In the meantime a clue of the highest importance came to hand. The black silk handkerchief with the red stripes was recognized by the foreman of an East End laundry. He said it was one that had come to them from a Newark Street lodging-house. Ordinarily he paid little attention to the things that came in the wash, but the vivid stripes on this handkerchief had attracted him, and he was sure the one shown him by the detective was the precise article that had come from the Newark Street lodging-house. The police called there and made inquiry concerning its patrons. They found that until the day before the murder, one of its guests was a man known as Steinie Morrison.

The answer to the puzzle was beginning to take shape.

About this time a woman appeared who said Beron had been seen in the company of a man who answered to the description of Morrison. She saw them on the Continental Road, Whitechapel, at two o'clock on the morning of the murder. She stated that Beron was wearing an overcoat with an astrakhan collar. This was correct. She also said that Beron was exhibiting his gold watch, of which he was inordinately proud. Besides this, he pulled out his wallet, which contained a number of bank-notes. His brother declared this was characteristic of Leon. He had come to England from Russia, and by hard work and miserly habits had become comparatively rich. At the time of the murder he was the owner of nine little houses in the slums—properties which he had acquired by hoarding his pennies and almost starving himself to death. He gloated over what he had—gloated like a miser.

The police came to the conclusion that it was then Morrison conceived the idea of robbing Beron. Seemingly he had taken him to Clapham Common, where he could do the job most effectively. The distance between Whitechapel and Clapham Common was calculated, and it was decided that the time at which Morrison was seen by the woman and the time the murder was committed was just sufficient to admit of the journey between the two places.

Two days later Morrison appeared at the Newark Street lodging-house, and after getting some clothing went to a restaurant in the neighborhood for breakfast. Sitting near him was a stranger. Steinie, who seemed care-free and happy, paid no attention to the man. At an adjoining table sat two other strangers. Presently a fourth stranger came in, and going over to Morrison said quietly:

"I want you, Steinie; come with me."

Morrison attempted to make a fight, but the other three strangers—detectives from Scotland Yard—jumped up and helped the newcomer to subdue him and take him to the nearest police station. He had a criminal record, and he did not deny it. Indeed, he was rather boisterous in admitting the fact. The police were deeply interested in his demeanor while he was under arrest. When he was first approached, he was obviously taken by surprise; but afterward his manner was one of defiant contempt.

There was a rather significant incident when he was finally taken before Chief Constable Frederick Wensley, of Scotland Yard. It is common knowledge that the practice of extorting confessions from prisoners is practically unknown in that institution. Crooks are aware of this, and they act accordingly. As Steinie Morrison was brought into Wensley's room, he straightened himself and cried out indignantly: "You have accused me of murder! I wish to make a statement!"

The Chief Constable and his assistants stared at Morrison, for *no one had accused the man of murder!*

Later the Chief questioned all who had anything to do with the case, and they assured him with great positiveness that no one had whispered the slightest intimation of murder to the prisoner. It is not unusual to make arrests on suspicion; and when this happens no charges are made by the officers. They leave that to their superiors. And when a formal charge is made, it is usually for some lesser offense.

However, nothing of this was said to Morrison at the time he blurted out the unexpected words. He was assured that he could make a statement if he wished, but that he should remember that anything he said might be used against him later. A clerk called in took down what the prisoner had to say. The result was as follows:

"I have sent for Divisional Inspectors Ward and Wensley and desire to make a voluntary statement in consequence of my having been arrested this morning under the suspicion of murder, Mr. Wensley having told me this.

I am an Australian, born in Sydney, brought up in England. I am a baker and confectioner, and now a traveler in common jewelry. During the month of September I obtained a situation as a journeyman baker at 213 Lavender Hill.

"I should think I was there about ten weeks altogether. I was sleeping there the whole of that time. I left of my own accord, having saved up about four pounds. I then commenced to travel in cheap jewelry. I went to reside at Number 5 Grove Street, E., and remained there two weeks. I bought the cheap jewelry from various persons. You will find the receipt for some of it in my bag. On leaving Grove Street I went to reside at Number 91 Newark Street. I remained there until last Sunday, and then went to live with a girl named Florrie at 116 York Road, and have continued to live with her until the present time. Last night I stayed with a friend named Mrs. Cinnamon, who lives in a building off Grove Street—the number is 32, and is next to a grocer's shop—as it was too late to return to my lodgings. This is my voluntary statement, and all I wish to say."

AS a statement this could hardly be called illuminating. As a matter of fact, it was intended to be the alibi of Steinie Morrison. But while it was substantially correct, it was far from being air-tight.

It was said that bloodstains were discovered on Morrison's shirt and his necktie, but later witnesses were found who disproved this. The police were not depending on that to make out their case. They went to his room, and in the lining of his hat they found a railway cloak-room ticket which proved to be a voucher for a revolver and a box of cartridges. They were part of the tools of trade of Steinie Morrison.

The question to determine was whether he was at Clapham Common on that New Year's morning when Leon Beron was murdered. It was now fully agreed that Beron had been killed for his money. The cab-driver who had carried the two men from Whitechapel to Clapham Common positively identified Morrison as the man who had been with Beron.

A waiter in the Warsaw Restaurant testified that Morrison had been in his place and had asked him to take care of a large-sized package which he said contained a flute. The waiter said that this "was as heavy as a bar of iron." This bit of testimony caused a great deal of controversy before and after the trial. It was claimed that the witness had a grudge against Morrison and that he was trying to "get even" with him by this statement.

The police scored heavily, however, when they proved that Morrison had been penniless the day before Christmas, and that on New Year's Day he was spending money recklessly. The inevitable woman in the case appeared at this time in the person of Eva Flitterman. She said he called on her the night after the murder and wanted to marry her. He went so far as to ask the consent of Eva's mother. Morrison received no definite answer from them. He was in a generous mood, however, because he cashed a four-pound note for her brother and gave Eva a present of two pounds.

Where did he get this money?

The trial was one of the most sensational ever held in England. Sir Richard Muir, who prosecuted for the Crown, did so with vigor and relentlessness. Morrison was brave enough to take the stand in his own behalf in spite of his knowledge that Muir would thoroughly rake over his past record. Morrison not only met the assaults that were made upon him, but assumed a defiant attitude toward Muir. In certain details he won out, but the weight of the evidence was against him, and the British jury found him guilty of murder in the first degree.

Justice Darling put on the black cap and condemned Morrison to death in these words:

"Steinie Morrison, you have been found guilty after a long, careful and most patient investigation, of the crime of willful murder. Every point which could be possibly put, every argument which could be used, was submitted to the court and the jury on your behalf. They have arrived at the conclusion—the only conclusion, as it appears to them, consistent with the whole of the evidence against you—that you did on that night, either alone or with another, kill that man Leon Beron. Undoubtedly your case was supported by evidence demonstratively false. I am sure that that did not weigh unduly with the jury, and that they have convicted you upon the strength of the evidence for the prosecution and upon that alone. As for anything you may have to say hereafter, you must be advised by your solicitor and learned counsel; I can say nothing. My duty is to pass the judgment which the law awards; it is that you be taken hence to the prison whence you came; that you be taken thence to a place of lawful execution; that you be there hanged by the neck until your body be dead; and may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

As these words came from the lips of the Justice, the prisoner gave a despairing shriek and cried:

"I do not believe that there is a God in heaven!"

His bitterness to all who had anything to do with his arrest and trial was almost inconceivable. He protested that the verdict was a gross miscarriage of justice. This cry was taken up in London, and in a short time the Home Secretary found himself deluged with petitions praying for a reprieve for the condemned man. Names by the thousands were signed to the papers which were circulated throughout the city. It may be said, parenthetically, that this is a well-established English custom. It is rare for a man or woman to be sentenced to death for murder without bringing forth the inevitable petition praying for mercy, and in this case there was some doubt in the public mind; that being true, there was no difficulty in getting all sorts of people to join in the protest. The Home Secretary sat up all of one night reading the evidence in the case, and on the following morning announced that the death penalty had been commuted to life imprisonment.

This news gave satisfaction to everybody—that is, everybody except Steinie Morrison. He said that he would rather be hanged than imprisoned for life. He was violent about it, and insisted that if they believed him guilty they should hang him, and that if they thought he was innocent, they should set him free. This sounds logical enough; but unfortunately, trials for murder cannot be settled as easily as that. Morrison proved a sullen and morose prisoner. He constantly berated the detectives, and when it was reported, one morning, that Alfred Ward, the Scotland Yard man who had gathered much of the evidence against him, had been killed by an air-bomb during the war, he exclaimed:

"Now my belief in God has been restored!"

HE died in prison in 1921, but interest in his case has not ceased in England, and it is still talked about.

It should be said that Sir Richard Muir, who prosecuted Morrison, was fully convinced of his guilt.

Even many of those who urged that he be given clemency were satisfied that he was present when Leon Beron was murdered. Their theory was that two men were present when the crime was committed and that the actual murder was done by a confederate of Steinie Morrison. He afterward participated in the robbery, they argued, and was given half the proceeds. If this be true, Morrison, under the law, was equally guilty.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

THE *Ranee Sylvia* lay moored three cable-lengths off Blake Pier in the picturesque harbor of Hongkong —her dark bluish-green paint making her blend with the Kowloon hills in the background until one would scarcely have noticed her were it not for the sheer beauty of her lines. The Trevor house-flag rippled lazily from the truck of her after polemast and the R.N.R. ensign from the jack-staff at the stern. No yacht-club ensign was in evidence, nor was she registered in any, yet that long bluish-green hull with a single squat funnel was known the world over as one of the most famous craft on the seven seas—a boat that could do thirty-five in a fairly heavy sea and over forty in smoother water since the installation of her triple-screw, heavy-oil motors. She was the deep-water home of a famous family.

On the morning when she ran gracefully in through the Ly-ee-mun Channel at the east end of the harbor, a handsome young fellow in grease-stained overalls leaned over one end of the bridge giving low-voiced orders as to the way he wanted the craft moored—her bow in line with Blackhead's Point on Kowloon—her stern pointing directly at the Canton boat-pier in Victoria. By his side was a shorter, slender figure, also in overalls, which might have been taken for that of a boy at first glance. The crew supposed that Viscount Salcombe, the Marquess' only son, would be getting married some day and surmised his choice would be the Honorable Jean Wallington, daughter of Earl Falknyss—so her orders on the yacht were obeyed as smartly as if coming from the Viscount himself.

With a final glance at the general direction of the heavy copper aërials overhead, the two went below into the commodious 'tween-deck space over the Number Two hold, forward, the starboard side of which had been fitted up as a well-equipped laboratory while the port side, taking in something more than its half of the beam, was an equally up-to-date machine-shop capable of handling a fairly good-sized dynamo, or motors of speed-boat size. On the long steel work-bench topped with three-inch oak, there was a rough but businesslike contraption which resembled a powerful radio-set only because it had sixteen thermionic valves or "tubes" of unusual shape, and six connections for five-element ones. Attached to the center of it was a twelve-foot pipe of laminated glass, two inches in diameter, the inner end of which passed through the center of an eighteen-inch diaphragm of steel so thin that tapping on its edge with a wrench produced visible ripples. Behind this, inside, were very sensitive magnets arranged in a circle at an exact micrometer distance behind the diaphragm—connected with the input-end of the transformers, tubes and condensers in the box. Through the center of the glass pipe ran a half-inch copper electrode ten feet long, heavily insulated from the set and connected with a generator capable of sending a thousand-volt current through another mysterious-looking box before it reached the glass pipe.

After carefully detaching the glass pipe, box and generator, the Viscount and the Honorable Jean lifted the machine upon a wide board stretcher, with handles—then called a couple of the crew to carry it aft to the big saloon, stretching athwartships in the rear of the dining-saloon, which served as both living-room and experimenting quarters for the family while at sea. When the machine had been lifted off upon a wide transom bench which ran along the rear bulkhead, and the men had gone forward with the stretcher, Salcombe and the girl re-connected it—this time with a cable from another generator in the motor-room below—and busied themselves soldering a number of connections which they had not cared about having the sharp-eyed electricians among the crew see just yet—though there was no question as to the loyalty of every man aboard. When everything was finally ready the Viscount pointed the glass pipe, with its

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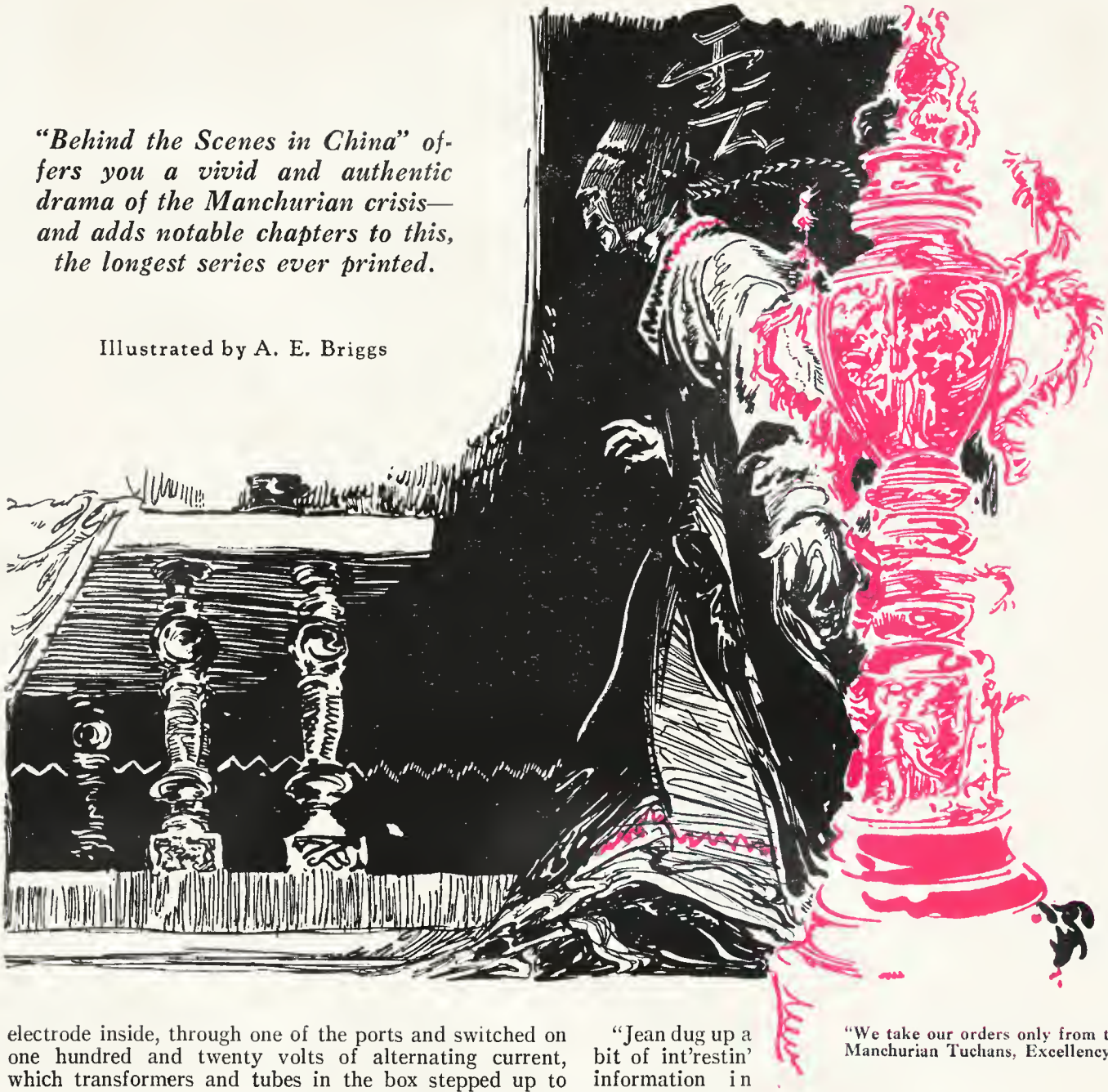


"We take our orders only from the Manchurian Tuchans, Excellency!"

electrode inside, through one of the ports and switched on one hundred and twenty volts of alternating current, which transformers and tubes in the box stepped up to over a thousand volts, giving the big diaphragm an extreme sensitivity to sound-waves. . . .

On the other side of the saloon, the handsome old Duchess of Ascoynham—who had been reading rather desultorily before the Marchioness should take her ashore to visit friends—had laid down her book and was watching these proceedings with something like a blend of curiosity and amazement. One of her remarks after the yacht put to sea had been that it was her first experience on a gentleman's yacht where navvies or mechanics pursued their activities in the main saloon, garbed in greasy overalls, and that the saloon itself looked more like an electrical laboratory or a hydrographic museum than anything she'd ever seen on a pleasure-craft! And Marchioness Nan had added to the old lady's bewilderment when she said that the only reason her son and the Honorable Jean changed their clothes for any meal during the day was purely out of deference to Her Grace's prejudices—that it really cramped their style a bit.

Now, when the Duchess mildly inquired what on earth the two were up to, Lord Salcombe explained, as tersely yet as explicitly as he could:

"Jean dug up a bit of int'restin' information in London, d'ye see, concernin' a brute of a Soviet agent. Pretty straight inference that the scoundrel was bein' sent out here to the Orient to take advantage of this Manchurian situation—presumably to cook up something in Tokyo. He left Brindisi on the P. & O. *Malwa* for Hongkong two days after we left Devon—the boat was in the Canal when we passed her. Naturally, with our speed, we're miles ahead of her—prob'ly a good forty-eight hours when we dropped anchor here.

"Now, if you were on deck, Your Grace, an' familiar with this harbor, you'd notice that we're moored in such a position that the P. & O. anchorage an' buoy are a bit under two cable-lengths from us in line with the Naval Depot, ashore. Durin' the voyage out from Port Said, Sam Howard, our chief operator, has taken down every message sent from the *Malwa* or received by her since she left Brindisi. Of course the ones to other passengers, except two we know to be in with the Russian, are none of our business an' have been destroyed—but we've a lot of suspicious data on that agent."

"Really, Ivo, one quite fails to understand in what way

this secret agent or his doings concern you at all. You're not connected with the British Governm'nt in any way, my dear boy!"

Lord Ivo nodded gravely as he responded:

"Quite true, at the moment—though all of us have been at one time or another. But—d'ye see—anything which makes the Manchurian situation worse than it is now—more critical as regards the possibilities involved—is of acute int'rest to every European Power, particularly Britain, considerin' her immense commercial investm'nts in the East. Personally, we and our friends are quite extensively invested out here—also, we have many friends among the Chinese an' Japs. We've no friends at all among the Muscovite crowd. Consequently, whatever information we get about the activities of this Soviet agent should be in the hands of our Foreign Office—also the Nanking-Shanghai governm'nt—as soon as we can give them anything definite."

The old Duchess sniffed.

"Well, possibly there may be something in what you say, though it looks like unofficial meddling to me—much better left in the hands of the proper Governm'nt officials! Has that contraption, yonder, anything to do with all this?"

"Well, d'ye see, we're hopin' that it may come in useful, though we're only testin' it out for the first time. Thing I've been workin' at a bit—utilizin' direct sound-waves instead of the Hertzian ones. Chuck a pebble into a lake an' you observe a lot of circular ripples goin' out from the splash—which apparently die out within a short distance, as far as your eye can tell. As a matter of fact, some of the ripple-impulse travels at least ten times as far in the water, though you can't detect it with the eye. Same proposition with persons talking. A shout can be heard across water at least half a mile under favorable conditions—with a megaphone, possibly three miles. If one can pick up the part of that shout which goes beyond human hearing, and amplify it enormously, he theoretically should be able to follow a conversation carried on at least five miles away, or farther. So much for that part of it. Now, in wireless broadcasting we use a carrier-wave, which is modulated by speech through a microphone. In this talking-amplification I've been working on, there must be something like an accompanying carrier-wave to penetrate stone, brick or any other sort of walls that muffle and prevent the escape of talking, inside—something like an x-ray effect, which penetrates most substances and reveals others inside of them—probably like this new ray discovered the other day, which showed an apparent crystalline structure inside the x-ray of the bone itself. I've been working six months upon various combinations with that object in view—and by the merest accident, I discovered an entirely new ray as yet unknown or undreamed of. In fact, it was a chance experiment with this new ray which started me working on amplified sound-waves at the same time. I discovered that sound in a room with brick walls apparently got through those walls, with much greater volume, at the point where this new ray passed through. Presumably—though I don't know that to be the case—the new ray is etheric like the x-ray and naturally would not combine with an atmospheric wave like sound. But radio-waves travel along the surface of a wire or core of wires instead of through the mass, like telegraphic or dynamic impulses—and it may be possible that these new phenomena act in some such way. Anyhow, sound will travel in an opposite direction to the ray itself and apparently very close to it, through almost any substance, including cork. You follow me? Very good!

"We are now projecting one of those rays directly at Governm'nt House, yonder, an' our sound-magnifyin' machine (to give it a non-technical descriptive name) is adjusted exactly along the ray's surface. Of course this machine of ours will pick up all of the talk or noises in the spot upon which it is trained—but, so far, we've obtained a good bit of selectivity in this way. Soprano or tenor voices—the high notes of a violin—have a much greater frequency in kilocycles than a baritone voice or 'cello—and they in turn, much greater frequency than a bass voice or bass-viol. In fact we've obtained more than fifty diff'rent sound-frequencies, any one of which we can hold with condensers and tune all the others out. I heard you say that you and His Excellency, Sir Cedric, are old friends; then you'd recognize his voice if you heard it? Eh? Very good! We'll fish for him!"

For obvious reasons there was no loud-speaker connected with the set. Salcombe and the Honorable Jean adjusted head-frames with ear-phones having soft-rubber rims. Then he cut down the power of the machine to a minimum so they shouldn't be deafened by an explosion of noise in case the set worked as they hoped—and switched it in circuit with his unknown ray. Slowly turning on more power with a potentiometer, they were hearing, in another moment, a number of voices more loudly and clearly than in ordinary conversation. By tuning in the deeper tones and cutting out the others, the Viscount got a fairly deep voice that was not more than ten kilocycles from the man next to him, though both were baritones. The other man was dictating a letter, presumably in some room in line with the first man, who seemed unquestionably to be talking with some woman whose voice they got for a second just so as to make sure. Then Salcombe called the Duchess over and adjusted the phones over her ears. For a moment, an expression of amazed wonderment came into her face—then it slowly turned quite pink as she removed the head-frame and laid it down.

"Really, Ivo, I think that's disgraceful of you! It is certainly Sir Cedric—and he's rowing Lady Pauline about something—prob'ly in her own boudoir. Why—why—I'm ashamed to think I was listening! It really isn't done, you know!"

"But, Your Grace, we only got one side of it, you know—didn't hear what Her Ladyship said at all! That lets you out, doesn't it? Oh, now, Duchess—don't be too Victorian! Our little machine, here, works like a bird! Do you get *that?* Impossible to figure its value when perfected, d'ye see! One thing we must do, however, in less than forty-eight hours—an' that is duplicate the sound-part of this machine! One side of a conversation is no good to us if we just happen to have any luck with that Soviet agent. By using two sets—one tuned to his voice and the other to whoever's talking with him—we get the whole conversation—synchronizing the sets."

By the next morning, the Viscount had finished roughly putting together a duplicate set which he could synchronize with the other on different frequencies—but as a number of friends from the shore were coming aboard to visit the Duchess, they set up their unknown ray generator and the sound-amplifiers in the Marquess' private suite at the stern of the yacht where nobody could watch or hear them.

About five in the afternoon, the *Malwa* poked her nose in through the Sulphur Channel at the west end of the harbor, slowly losing way until she picked up her mooring-buoy and the Lascars made fast to it—the tide drifting her stern around until her accommodation-ladder on the starboard side was directly facing the yacht. Jean and Ivo had been joined by Prince Abdool of Afridistan, who was by far the most competent among the Free Lances as an Oriental linguist. All three were studying through prism-binoculars the faces along the rail of the C-deck, either waiting for the shore-launches at the foot of the ladder or watching the shore-visitors who had come off from Blake Pier in their own boats.

In but a moment, Jean said in a low tone:

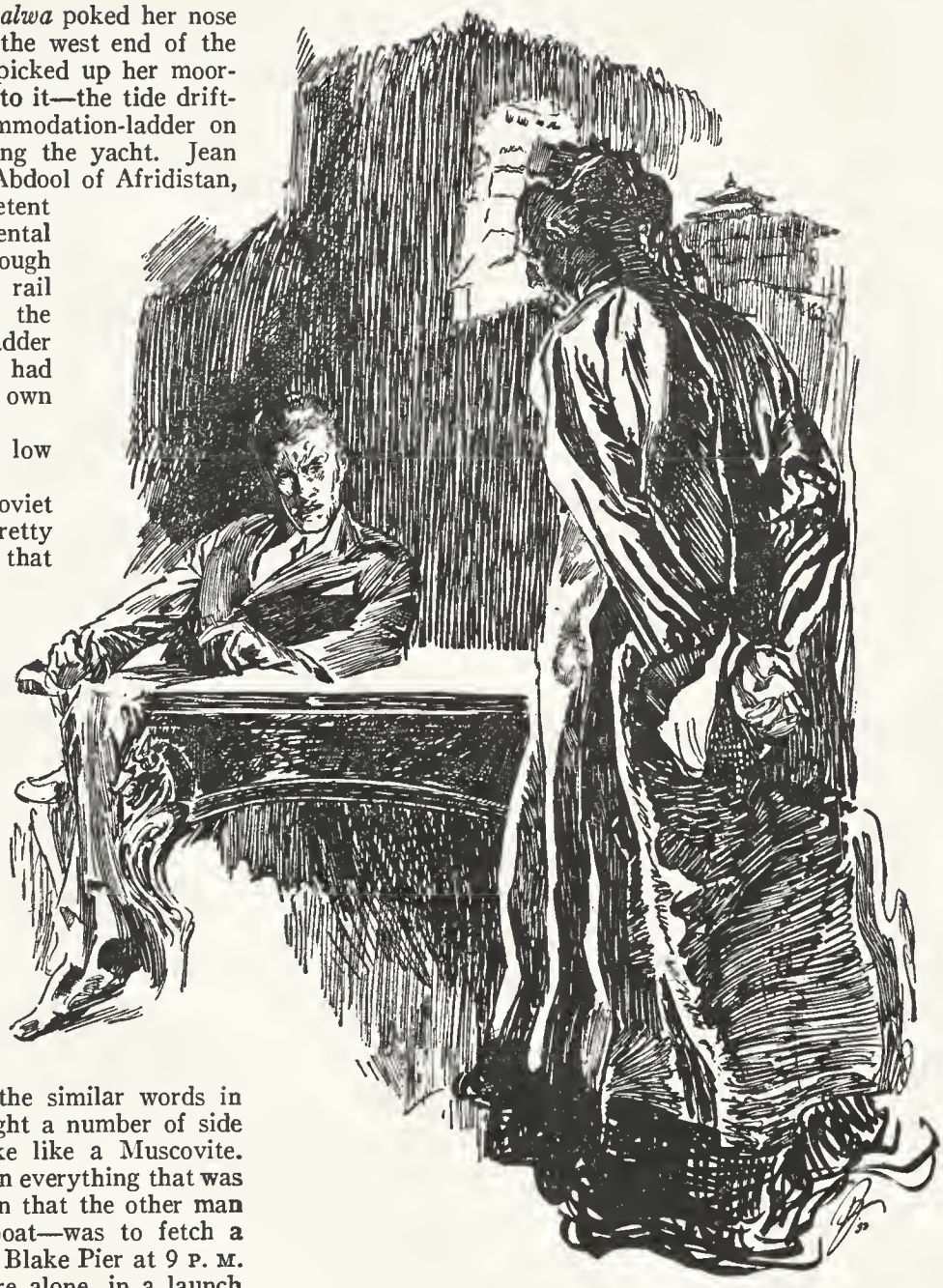
"There he is! . . . . That's the Soviet bounder—talking with another man pretty well up for'ard! See them? By that boat at the davits!"

Salcombe promptly swung the ray-electrode—in its protecting and directing glass pipe, which was painted dark green, like the yacht's hull—then switched on the current and began to tune his condensers. The pitch of the two voices was so nearly the same that but little adjusting was necessary—and what sounded like a very loud conversation in Portuguese almost deafened them until His Lordship modulated it a bit. He had picked up a smattering of Portuguese in Brazil some years before, while Jean's Spanish, although very far from fluent, was good enough to enable her to recognize the similar words in both languages. Prince Abdool caught a number of side remarks in Russian, which he spoke like a Muscovite. So, as each of the three scribbled down everything that was caught, they had positive information that the other man—who presently got into a shore-boat—was to fetch a certain unnamed Nipponese down to Blake Pier at 9 P. M. The Russian was to be waiting there alone, in a launch with a canvas hood, and would run the Jap down the harbor for a private conference—as far as Ly-ee-mun and back—discussing certain details which the Russian had to have before he could make a definite move in the scheme they laid out between them. Neither of the three understood Japanese, but Jean had heard the Russian say in London that he didn't, either—which indicated that the projected conference would be in Russian or in French. After testing out their equipment by tuning one voice after another on the *Malwa* until it was possible to follow it above the surrounding interference, they covered the sets with a tarpaulin, and dressed for dinner.

When they went back to their machines again shortly after eight, Prince Abdool said:

"I suppose you'll have to use the searchlight as if you were signaling with it in code, in order to spot just where that launch is down the harbor—not letting the light rest on them except when it swings from one side to the other. Eh?"

"We don't need any searchlight at all, Abdool! I can follow that launch with my ray anywhere, in pitch darkness—it's invisible, you know. When we hear 'em, or the beat of their launch-motor, we know we're squarely *on* 'em—an' when they begin to fade we know we're a bit too far to one side or the other. Catch it?"



"I suppose it never occurred to this secret agent that his Japanese friend might betray the whole plot," said the Tuchan significantly.

"*Aie—bismallah!* When one's days be numbered, the mind grows sluggish—it does not see that which a child would see!"

When the launch conveying the Russian and his Japanese confederate started out from Blake Pier, with the Muscovite running the boat, the three on the yacht caught every word that was said, amplified so powerfully that they distinctly heard even a few whispers when the pair were instinctively cautious. At ten o'clock the launch returned, and they took rickshas to a small hotel patronized by Orientals in Queens Road. The listeners were comparing notes on what each had heard. Presently the Viscount said:

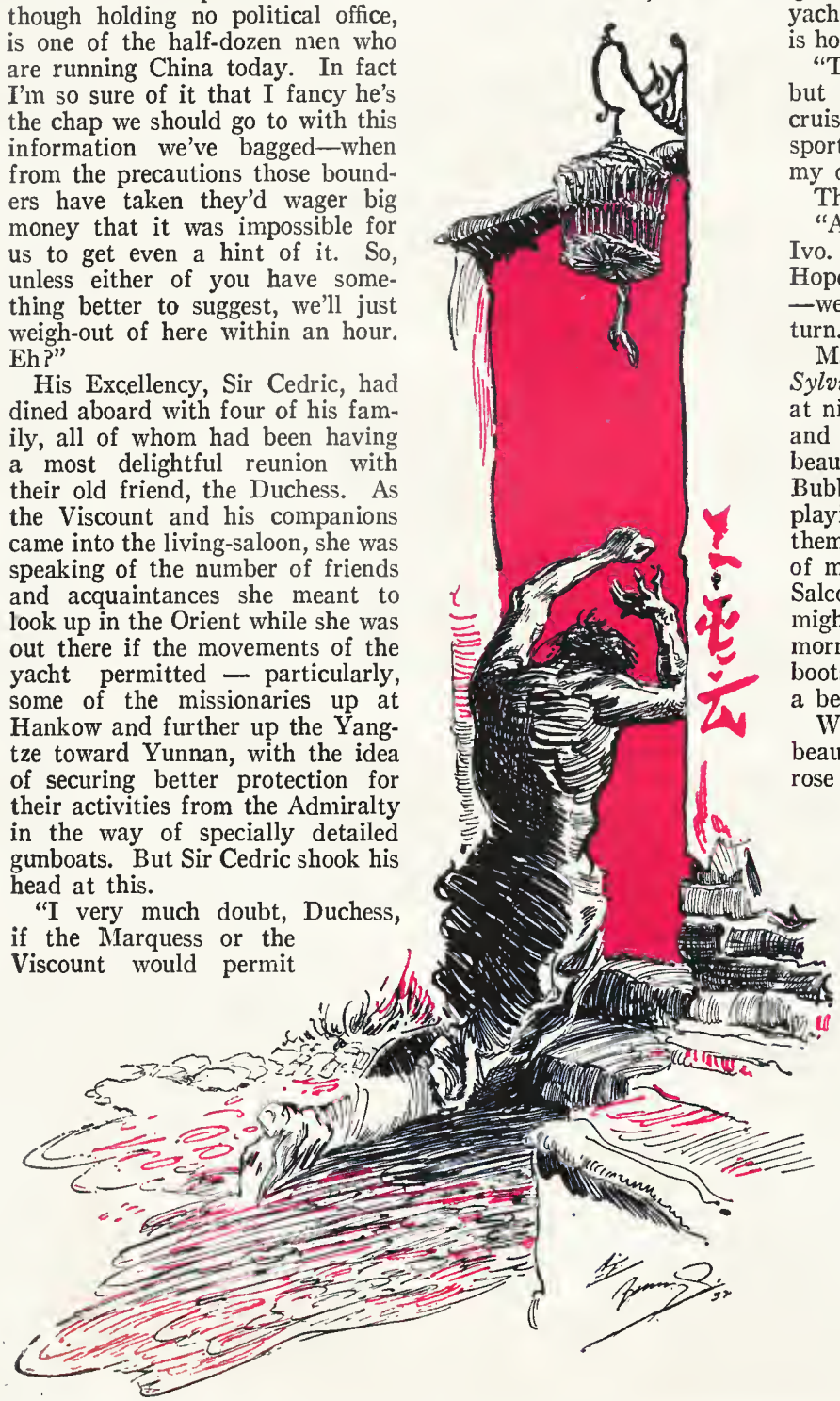
"If they carry this scheme out—and I'm blessed if I see why they shouldn't, for every detail appears to have been covered, and Moscow has sent to Vladivostok banks

more than enough cash to cover their side of it in men, munitions, food and clothing—this proposition is considerably more of an actual menace than it seemed when Jean dug it up in London. That bounder is going to run up to Canton by night train—have conferences with communists there—and then leave here on the China Navigation boat tomorrow evening for Shanghai. Best that boat can do is seventeen in average weather. If we pull out within an hour or so we can be in the Whang-Po thirty or forty hours ahead of her—we'll do the odd seven hundred knots by eight or nine tomorrow evening. The big plane is still lying on the river opposite the Bund—the Governor's spending a week or so out at the Tuchan's villa an' havin' a nightly set-to at chess with him. Sir Harry Archer is stayin' ashore at the Astor House, opposite the bridge over Soochow Creek.

"I'm of the impression that the Tuchan Wu-H'sien-Li, though holding no political office, is one of the half-dozen men who are running China today. In fact I'm so sure of it that I fancy he's the chap we should go to with this information we've bagged—when from the precautions those bounders have taken they'd wager big money that it was impossible for us to get even a hint of it. So, unless either of you have something better to suggest, we'll just weigh-out of here within an hour. Eh?"

His Excellency, Sir Cedric, had dined aboard with four of his family, all of whom had been having a most delightful reunion with their old friend, the Duchess. As the Viscount and his companions came into the living-saloon, she was speaking of the number of friends and acquaintances she meant to look up in the Orient while she was out there if the movements of the yacht permitted — particularly, some of the missionaries up at Hankow and further up the Yang-tze toward Yunnan, with the idea of securing better protection for their activities from the Admiralty in the way of specially detailed gunboats. But Sir Cedric shook his head at this.

"I very much doubt, Duchess, if the Marquess or the Viscount would permit the yacht to go up as far as Hankow at present—conditions bein' what they are. Here in Hongkong, of course, you're under the Union Jack in a British colony—as safe as you'd be anywhere on the globe, I fancy. In Shanghai—if you stuck to the British Concession, policed by our Sikhs—you're quite likely to see occasional unpleasant things, but you'd be safe enough, personally. Outside of the Concession, however, it's difficult to say whether the coolies you meet may be communists, or bandits on the side. The times you were here before, d'ye see, the Western governm'nts maintained a fair degree of order in the coast ports—an' there are no finer men on earth than educated Chinese. But you must remember that the Asiatic viewpoint differs greatly from the way that we look at matters. By the way, why not come ashore with us an' stay as long as you please at Governm'nt House? It would give us much pleasure to have you. Then the yacht could pick you up when the Marchioness is homeward-bound. What?"



"That's lovely of you and Pauline, Cedric—but I rather feel as if I'd signed on for the cruise, don't you know, an' should have enough sportin' blood to stick by the yacht. Eh, Nan, my dear? How long do we stay here in port?"

The Marchioness looked inquiringly at her son.

"About fifty minutes, Duchess," said Lord Ivo. "Then we're weighing-out for up the coast. Hope it doesn't upset your round of visits ashore—we'll try to give you more time when we return."

Making an exceptionally fast run, the *Ranee Sylvia* anchored off the Bund in the Whang-Po at nine, next evening. Before ten, the Viscount and the Honorable Jean reached the Tuchan's beautiful villa in its walled-in gardens out on Bubbling Well Road and found the Marquess playing chess with Wu-H'sien-Li, who greeted them with evident pleasure. Jean had thought of making this visit in effective war-paint—but Salcombe said there was no telling where they might go or what they might get into before morning. So, like him, she had appeared in boots and riding-breeches, with an automatic in a belt-holster under her open tunic.

When they were comfortably seated in the beautiful room with its blending tones of old-rose silk, carved teak and colorful rugs, Jean gave them an account of the chance word or two, overheard in a West End restaurant, which had induced her to crawl over the roofs of several houses in a Bloomsbury block to listen in on a conversation which took place in an upper room with one dormer window. She told of her discussion of the matter with Lord Ivo, the Marchioness and Prince Abdool at the famous Trevor mansion in Park Lane—of their decision to leave Devon at once on the yacht, reaching Gibraltar before the *Malwa* left Brindisi—of the last-moment invitation to the Duchess, whom they knew the voyage would benefit. Then Salcombe took up the story with a few brief points about the unknown ray he had discovered and the sound-detecting contrivance he had worked out to use with it.

"I'll not bore His Excellency with technical data. The story is this: Dimitri Rostowski is about as unscrupulous an' scoundrelly a secret agent as there is in

Moscow. Arms, munitions an' men are being sent out over the Trans-Siberian to a rendezvous among the hills north of Nerchinsk. Zero weather, of course, deters no Siberian. So while Tokyo is marking time until spring, before they even think of any serious military operations in Northern Manchuria,—because they simply can't stand those howling Arctic blizzards that come down across Siberia,—the communists are slated to drift along the Chinese Eastern in small numbers. They'll be garbed in Chinese uniforms, an' are to mix with the armies in the pay of the North Manchurian Tuchans,—rake in all the Hoang-Ho an' Mongolian bandits they can find, to join 'em, an' be all set to throw in with any Jap offensive when the spring comes around. Three of the northern Chinese Generals are supposed to be in Nanking or Shanghai, now, for a conference with Rostowski when he arrives on that China Navigation boat due here tomorrow night or next day. And there also are a number of agents here who are in constant communication with every group of communists now in China. The way Rostowski blocked it out last night, in that conference down the harbor, they'll have force enough at strategic points in the spring to obtain complete control of all Manchuria and the Chinese coast-ports as well."

The Tuchan laughed—a mellow, rippling laugh of thorough amusement.

"I think not, Lord Ivo. No—I do not agree! But I will say the information brought by you and the honorable young lady is of great value in more ways than one, and I assure you our Nationalist Government is most thoroughly appreciative. Let us consider it in detail. Would you infer that this Dimitri Rostowski has been given *carte blanche* authority above even that of the Commissar-Governor at Vladivostok?"

"Why—my impression would be, Your Excellency, that they are supposed to coöperate in every underhand way—in all except an open declaration of war from Moscow."

"If the Commissar-Governor suddenly had brought to his attention something he had previously overlooked—if both of them most unexpectedly found the Nipponese hanging back and not willing to go on with the plan—you would suppose that the Commissar-Governor would have sufficient authority to stop Rostowski from making another move until further orders? Eh?"

"Well—if that Vladivostok governor suddenly ran up against something that didn't look so good, he'd prob'ly be able to pour his facts into Moscow by wireless in spite of anything Rostowski could do. Might depend somewhat upon how the governor stands with the Commissars, as compared with this bounder—but presumably, he could stop any further action until he found out just what he was up against."

"Ah! . . . That, I think, would be my own conviction—and in that case we have very little to fear. This agent himself, however, is in position to stir up enough trouble through communist propaganda, even in the heart of China, to cost us a good many valuable Chinese lives. So we shall consider him seriously and—er—eliminate his activities. The Japanese, Taguchi, is another type altogether—an efficient soldier who is only trying to further the interests of his own country and carry out his orders. We can respect such a man. The Chinese Generals who are to betray us in the spring are more in the Rostowski class—we have our own ways of dealing with them at any time. The infiltration of communists and bandits among many of our Chinese regiments is a constant annoyance. Doubtless you may have noticed in the newspapers occasional reference to the shooting of whole regiments as bandits, by our National Army? That is but one way of handling them. We have others. You may also have an impression that our Government does not seriously get down to the creation of an effective national army. Well—we do not have to. As a race, we are peaceable—we dislike needless sacrifice of human lives. It has been said there is neither cohesion nor national feeling among the Chinese—but that is not really so. Our more excitable students and coolies are now begging to be enrolled in armies to fight Japan. Our real strength, and most formidable weapon, however, lies in the overpowering mass-weight of our population of four hundred and thirty-five million. Just figure up how much food it takes to feed them every day—food supplied to some extent both by Japan and Russia—the millions of manufactured products, largely Nipponese, that are purchased by Chinese every week! Now at any time that we consider aggression has reached too serious a point, we have merely to serve notice upon Japan and Russia that we stop, next morning, purchasing a single yen or ruble's worth of their goods—will encourage rioting that will destroy *all* of what they now have stocked in China and Manchuria! If we carried that out as far as it is always in our power to do, it would bankrupt Japan and very seriously cramp the Soviets."

"But how could you possibly get really concerted action among such an overwhelming population?"

"Through the Benevolent Societies. There is not a coolie or any other grade of Chinese who is not enrolled in one or another of them all over the world. We have no word in our language with any such imaginary meaning as the outside world gives to *tong*—and our Societies are very far from being murder associations, though of course we do kill those who violate the regulations, in order to maintain respect for positive orders. There is a Central Organization, with delegates from each of the two hundred subordinate Societies, which absolutely controls the whole of them. And a Council of Twenty is elected every ten years from the Central Organization. Within twenty-four hours, an order given here in Shanghai could reach every Chinese in the Republic by use not only of modern methods like wireless and telephones, but several native methods of signaling that have been in use ten thousand years. Now—let us get back to the immediate problem of dealing with Rostowski. As the crew on that boat are Chinese, identification will be a simple matter—we shall know exactly where the man goes when he comes ashore. Somehow, the name is vaguely familiar to me. You have had a close look at him, Miss Jean? Is he by any chance a big man—smoothly shaved—with fair hair, cut *en brosse?* Rather neater in his clothes than one usually finds among the Muscovites—has a weakness for white silk handkerchiefs, and scent?"

"That's a very close description, Your Excellency—one would say you knew the man!"

The Tuchan smiled.

"Now that you have verified my suspicions, I did—for a month or two—here in Shanghai. We had occasion for keeping the man under observation. He was paying a great deal of attention to a wealthy lady of high rank among the Manchu families. He's the type that makes a strong appeal to women of a certain temperament. Of course he had no intention of marrying her, even if her family consented to any such degradation; he was merely after her money—she loaned or gave him several thousand taels. And he now returns to Shanghai after an absence

of several years. While he was apparently devoted to her upon that former occasion, he was secretly paying visits to a house out on the French Siccawei Road when he was supposed to be dining with his own countrymen. The handsome half-caste girl who lives there made money in a couple of tea-houses which she owns, not far from her own place, near the Dzing King Mioa Temple. Presumably, he'll make for that house shortly after his arrival—though he may have sense enough to spend the first evening with the Manchu lady. I think we will not interfere with him the first night ashore. He is now in no hurry for his political conferences here because his plans are all blocked out with Taguchi and he knows where to get in touch with his Manchurian agents. But afterward I will send him a note suggesting that he call upon me to discuss certain important matters—and the man will come. He's a colossal egotist, and is filled with curiosity."

THE Duchess hadn't even thought of going ashore with Lord Ivo and Jean after the yacht dropped anchor that night—being quite satisfied to play bridge with the Marchioness and Prince Abdool. But she was admitting to herself between hands that there seemed to be a vague something in the atmosphere of the Orient which she hadn't noticed during previous vists; there was a shade less of the old deference paid by the brown and yellow elements to the white. She had picked up vague hints of horrible occurrences in various localities—things worse than the mutiny so many years ago, in India. Strictly reared in tenets of Anglican beliefs, she instinctively would have held anything done by Russians to be fundamentally right, and things done by Asiatics fundamentally wrong, merely because the Russians had been until recently a Christian nation—still were, she was convinced, in spite of anything the Moscow Dictators could do! Consequently she was beginning to feel that she really couldn't approve of what Salcombe and this rather forward young minx were trying to do in the case of this Russian political agent. Why—why—they actually were hunting the man from one port to another as if he were no better than a fox with the hounds in full cry! Really—she must see her friend Wu-H'sien-Li tomorrow or the day after and ask him to stop the boy, as a favor to her, before he got into anything unpleasant. With her mind full of this, she couldn't help spilling some of it to her companions.

Marchioness Nan was celebrated for her tact, as also was Prince Abdool, but each of them could be sufficiently hard-boiled, upon occasion, to get an idea very forcibly across. After a moment's pause, the Marchioness said:

"My dear, we fancied this cruise would do you a world of good, provided you were willing to take things as they came and to adhere strictly to our cruising rules, as every guest of ours must do aboard the *Ranee*. Unofficially, we rate a connection with the Navy and do a good bit of experimenting for it—and are subject to Navy rules as to keeping our mouths shut concerning what we may do or see or say. You gave us your word about obeying those rules—we accepted it. Please don't forget those facts. This man Rostowski is conspiring with Japan to start a military offensive against China in the spring—preparing for it all through the cold weather—which must inevitably cost many thousands of valuable lives if he's not stopped! What Ivo and Jean have discovered about that bounder is now being told to a Chinese gentleman in a position of highest authority—far higher, in fact, than the President of the Chinese Republic. Rostowski and some of his confederates, presumably, will not live the week out."

"Why—Marchioness! . . . What a shocking thing to say or even think! As a Christian woman you must do your utmost to prevent any such possibility!"

"My dear Victorian lamb! One doesn't attempt putting out a fire by pouring paraffine on it, you know. Hadn't you heard of the sacks delivered at the headquarters of the Board in Hankow the other day, containing the heads of nine missionaries, including three women?"

"Nan! . . . . You mustn't tell me such shocking stories—prob'ly not a word of truth in them! —My salts! . . . Now where did I put my salts? Why should they kill missionaries—good men and women who are devoting their lives to doing these benighted heathen good?"

"Well—the inference would seem to be that the 'benighted heathen', as you call them (but who knew the stars and their courses—the arts of printing and weaving—long before the Christian era) aren't really anxious to be done good. Anyhow—the early elimination of this scoundrel, Rostowski, will go farther toward saving missionary lives than all the missionaries in the country could accomplish. And we very decidedly expect you, my dear, to keep your lovely mouth shut about what you may see or hear!"

At the Tuchan's villa, meanwhile, the subject of the Duchess had come up. Wu-H'sien-Li had known her for at least forty years as a cultured woman of widely admired character. In one way he regretted that she should be in China at a time when she was likely to see a number of things which she never could be made to understand—but all Chinese are fatalists. When the Marquess suggested postponing her call upon one excuse or another, the Tuchan shook his head.

"No—it will be a pleasure for me to see her—it is a compliment that she should remember me all these years, and wish to come here. I wish Madame Wu to know her. It may be that she will observe nothing to shock her sensibilities. On the other hand, a number of unpleasant things may happen. She is well into the sixties—at such an age, one takes the world as it comes—it's all among the experiences of a lifetime, and the West should know the East much better than it does."

So the Duchess accompanied them upon the second night following. She was introduced to Madame Wu—a cultivated Manchu whose taste in the color effects of her national costume was exquisite. The four women went out to look over the villa while the men talked politics. Presently another handsomely dressed Manchu lady was shown in to see the Tuchan—introduced to his guests as Madame Lei Mein Wong. The men had a suspicion as to whom she might be, though the conversation was kept upon general topics—but when the other women returned to the room they got the impression that she was merely one of the Tuchan's Manchu friends.

SOON thereafter, one of his servants came in to say that a Russian gentleman by the name of Rostowski was calling—and was told to fetch him in, after a whispered word to the Manchu lady had caused her to disappear behind the heavy velvet window-curtains. Rostowski was ushered in, quite evidently filled with a sense of his own importance. He seated himself near the Tuchan's desk after a general introduction and began sipping hot tea with the others while Wu-H'sien-Li smilingly described the recent adventures of a supposedly fictitious secret agent in the East. He made a good story of it, too—and only toward the last did the Muscovite begin to see marked resemblances in the occurrences.

"I suppose it never occurred to this secret agent that his Japanese friend might betray the whole plot because he felt that he couldn't trust or work with *canaille* of that sort—but it is certain that he will get no coöperation in the spring," said the Tuchan significantly. "If that agent were here among us, he probably wouldn't believe for a

moment that the Jap had betrayed him—but consider: The two were alone in that canvas-covered launch which left Blake Pier in Hongkong at nine o'clock last Friday night—running down as far as Ly-ee-mun—carefully keeping so far away from other craft that it was impossible for anyone to overhear them. Yet I have here a verbatim copy of every word that was said in that launch—every detail blocked out—every name of traitor generals and communist agents who are to coöperate with them. In order to give point to my story, I will read it to you." This he did—slowly and distinctly. The Russian's face was a mask, though gradually growing putty-colored. "Now when this agent reached Shanghai yesterday, he was expected to call and stay the night in one of our Manchu houses of the highest grade. But he did not put in an appearance. Instead, he spent last night and the forenoon at the house of a handsome and wealthy half-caste woman out on the French Siccawei Road." The Duchess wriggled in her chair—but Marchioness Nan's hand on her arm kept her quiet. "Now, as far as the Chinese Government is concerned, it has, of course, its own methods of dealing with such plots and either Nippon or Moscow when the psychological moment comes—so a story of this sort would not unduly alarm us. I trust that you, my friends, have found it of casual interest. However, let us change the subject. Are you staying with us for some time, Mr. Rostowski?"

"Why—yes—no—my plans are a bit unsettled, you see—various business matters to straighten out. So I'm afraid I shall have to take my leave—with much appreciation of the opportunity for meeting Your Excellency."

"Sorry you must hurry away—you'll find a ricksha at the gate of my compound, I think; usually one or two of them are there."

AFTER the fellow had left the house, Lei Mein Wong came from behind the curtains and quietly resumed her chair, holding out her cup for the Tuchan's man to fill again. While she was sipping it, he whispered to His Excellency—who remarked to her:

"Rostowski directed his ricksha-wallah to set him down at a house near the Dzing King Mioa Temple on the French Siccawei Road. If you care to burn a little incense in that particular temple, Lei Mein, my car is waiting outside the compound-gate, and will take you there. I think the priests will gladly provide you with an adequate escort when you leave."

Bowing low until her forehead touched his hand, she quietly went out. Then the Duchess began to sputter:

"Wu, my friend! . . . . What is it that you are trying to do with Mr. Rostowski? Why did you give him the utterly false impression that his Japanese friend had betrayed him?"

"In order that he might tell some one who will tell many others—create a strong feeling of distrust between Moscow and Tokyo. You see, we don't see eye to eye with them regarding that plot, Duchess."

"And why tell your Manchu friend just where he had gone? If ever I saw a jealous woman, she's one at this moment—her face was ghastly!"

"Yes—I had some such impression, myself. If you glance through the French newspaper in the morning you may find a paragraph to the effect that Rostowski joined his ancestors about an hour from this time. That Temple is in the French Concession—under the jurisdiction of their police. You see—it was a quite simple way out of what would have been an unpleasant duty for me."

The color drained slowly out of Her Grace's face. It was unthinkable that her old and valued friend could be a murderer—yet there was no getting by the fact that he had just connived at a murder—and what was worse, calmly admitted it. Her whole world of preconceived ideas upon right and wrong was whirling about her.

HER second experience with the Orient as it is—but not at all what she supposed it to be—came upon the third evening afterward, when she again went to the Tuchan's villa with the Trevors to figure out if possible how it was that her good friends, as she knew them to be, could so calmly accept actions and occurrences that would send a person to the gallows in England. She did vaguely sense the fact after they had most patiently explained it to her, over and over, that the Tuchans of China, like the Sultans and Tuans of Malaysia, act in a judicial as well as a governing capacity—and that she had no more reason to hold them to account for executions accepted as official than she would in the case of an English judge sentencing a man to be hanged. What made it still harder for her to comprehend, was the fact that all her life she had been vehemently opposed to capital punishment.

When the party had been chatting pleasantly for an hour one of the servants came in to say that three Manchurian generals were calling. The others noticed a fleeting expression of annoyance passing over the Tuchan's face, as if he were being somewhat crowded by occurrences ahead of their proper time—but after a moment's consideration, he said:

"These generals, my friends, refused to obey certain orders and have called, presumably, to offer me an explanation. Perhaps you would be interested in hearing their side of the matter? —Very good, Ah Fong! I will receive them here."

When the generals came in—dressed in neat service uniforms, which are smart but not gaudy in the Chinese armies—His Excellency rose from his chair, gravely bowed and asked them to be seated. After rice-cakes, cigarettes and wine had been passed around, he said:

"Some days ago, gentlemen, I sent word that I wished to confer with you here, upon important military matters—you three being then in conference at your winter camp. But without reading my note you tore it up and threw the pieces in my messenger's face—giving him five minutes to get out of the camp. Will you tell me just why you took that line?"

"Because we take our orders only from the Manchurian Tuchans, Excellency!" the pompous general answered.

"Ah! . . . . Yes. One inferred that it would be some such reason, although it was a short-sighted, discourteous action. Well—you were within your rights—and that incident is closed. As soon as my messenger could get down here and return, however, he took back another note to you from the Central Organization of the Benevolent Societies, signed by me as Chief Executive. The first note was merely a polite request—but the last one was an order! And you are quite well aware that a penalty is fixed for disobedience. All three of you read the note because the ideograph of the Central Organization was on the envelope. Then, as I am informed, you tore it up and ordered my messenger shot. I doubt if your minds were altogether at ease—but you didn't see how I could possibly reach you, surrounded by your own men, a full company of whom were lined up before you at the time."

The Tuchan's servants were pouring and passing around hot tea, with little rice-cakes, for everyone in the room, as His Excellency went on speaking. "But greatly to your surprise, a dozen of your own soldiers grasped your arms and tied them—removed your weapons—put you in long boxes which had been prepared before my messenger reached the camp, with ventilating-holes bored through them—and fetched you down to Shanghai as perishable freight. The ideograph of the Central Organization was

painted upon each box. I doubt if a man in all Manchuria or China would have meddled with those boxes. After reaching here, you were taken out—bathed, fed, given a day's rest—and told to come here this evening, knowing that you were under constant espionage at every step. Now—would you care to explain why you took the risk of defying the Central Organization in any such way? It may be that there is an acceptable explanation—certainly it will be much pleasanter for you if there is. Because—well—you know the laws of the Organization."

It is probable that until that moment the idea of their being in any personal danger while in His Excellency's villa didn't really percolate—especially in the midst of a party who evidently hadn't the least suspicion of anything tragic in the air. But suddenly one of the generals looked at his companions with growing fright in his eyes and set his tea-cup on the edge of the Tuchan's desk—began, fumblingly, to unfasten his tunic at the neck, while his face slowly took on a purplish tinge. The Tuchan spoke quietly to his servant:

"Assist the generals out into the compound, Ah Fong—where they can get plenty of fresh air to breathe. I fear their confinement in the boxes may have given them more or less bronchial congestion. If they feel like lying down for a while show them into some of the bedrooms and give them rice-brandy if they wish it."

When the officers had been assisted out by his servants, His Excellency said he regretted that they should have become indisposed while he was entertaining friends, but that such things were often unavoidable. The Duchess was fighting with herself against a wave of horror. There was nothing in their manner to indicate that the generals were even dangerously ill, and yet—oh, would she ever get out of her mind that column in the French newspaper about the head of a well-known Russian gentleman which had been found at the side of the road near the Dzing King Mioa Temple, with the body a few yards from it—the air heavy with temple-incense which hung in the morning mist!

The home of one general was in Dairen—another in Mukden—another, in Newchwang. Two days later, the English papers carried paragraphs to the effect that each of them had died at home from some pulmonary complaint and that the families were burying them near the graves of their ancestors—but the scoop the English reporters missed, through ignorance of sufficient Chinese, was carried in all of the Chinese and Japanese newssheets—and Russian, as well. The stiffened bodies of the generals had been found leaning against their own doors with the ideograph of the Central Organization cut into their foreheads, branding them as officially executed traitors to their native land. Which—perhaps fortunately—was something the Duchess never heard.

The Marquess said to Wu-H'sien-Li before leaving:

"I say, old chap! . . . . You did give us a bit of a jolt, you know. One can't help speculating upon what might have happened if your servants had grown a bit absent-minded at just the wrong moment that night! What?"

"You didn't notice, then, that Ah Fong served nobody but the three generals and that he used a red teapot? Your tea came from a coral-pink one. Also—there was an antidote if they had given me any acceptable excuse for disobeying—before the expiration of twenty minutes."

"My word! Do you know, Wu—I fancy that our famous poet hit the nail squarely on the head with one of his verses:

"And the end of the fight is a tombstone, white,
With the name of the late deceased—
And this epitaph, drear: 'A Fool lies here
Who tried to (make over) the East.'"

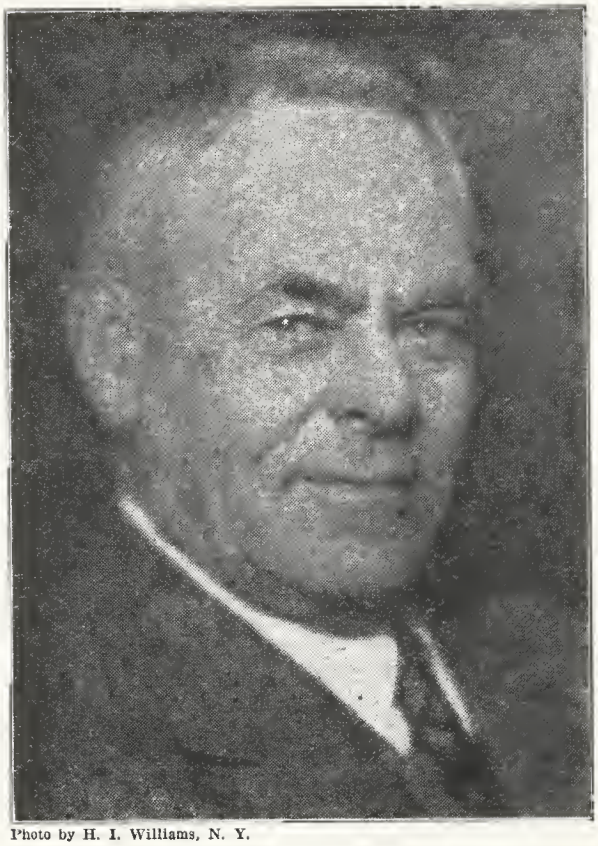


Photo by H. I. Williams, N. Y.

Charles D. Brower, who for nearly a half-century has been America's most northerly pioneer.

ON our way back to Smith's house, Kelley and I decided to leave for the north in the morning, and we prepared for an early start. We were up in time and had our breakfast, but when we went to harness the dogs, several were missing; after hunting for several hours, we had to give up all thought of starting that day. Along in the afternoon we located the animals three miles away in an old deserted igloo. At the time we could not find out who did it, but Kelley worked for Smith at Tigera during the whaling and found out; he had a row with the fellow who stole them, and shot him, but not until the native, who belonged to Cape Prince of Wales, had first taken a shot at him through the doorway of the same house in which the dogs had been hidden.

We started the following morning.

(After several days of travel, alternated with other days when Mr. Brower and his party were forced to camp, storm-bound by Arctic winter blizzards, they arrived at the Pitmagea River.)

We found there a family of Cape Prince of Wales Eskimos that had come since we passed south, evidently on their way from the Nooatak River. They did not seem pleased to see me, but were friendly enough with Baby and Arkibenna. At the time, I did not remember that they held a grudge against all whites for what had happened several years before when they had their drunken mix-up with the whaling crew.

I turned in as usual, expecting to be up early for a good start. It did not seem as though I had been asleep any time when Toctoo woke me, saying it was time to start, that the sled was all packed and the men were waiting outside; I took out my sleeping-skins, thinking it strange we were starting without anything to eat, especially as I

My Arctic Outpost

By CHARLES D. BROWER

This grand old man of the North has told you of his first voyages to Alaska in the employ of a whaling-company, and of his hunts with the Eskimo for the great bowhead whale and for caribou. Here he tells of his salvaging of a wrecked whaling-ship, of going out to hunt whales "on his own," and of many other tremendous adventures in this far Land of the Long Night.

could see by the stars that it was no more than the middle of the night.

Arkibenna was outside, ready to help lash the sled, but Baby was nowhere in sight. When all was ready, Toctoo went ahead of the team, telling me to take the rear of the sled; and as we started, I saw Arkibenna drop away from us, standing at one side with his rifle over his arm; I did not know what was up, and no one told me. Toctoo kept on for at least ten miles; then she stopped the team, saying we would wait there for the others, that they would soon be along, and that while we waited, she would make a fire and cook some tea for me. I wanted her to tell me what it was all about, but she would not. She said that as soon as Baby came, he would tell me, if he wanted to.

We must have waited two hours before the men came; then for some time they would say nothing except that I would know *"na-na-ko,"* meaning later. We all had something to eat; and then, just before starting on again, Baby told me. He had heard the old man from Cape Prince of Wales telling his son that he was going to kill me during the night when the others were asleep; they were talking outside the entrance to the house; Baby was going out, but overhearing them, he hid inside, and then, at the first chance, he told the others. Baby waited outside, Arkibenna and Toctoo inside, and none of them slept. Arkibenna took my revolver and hid it under his attiga, Toctoo had a hunting-knife, and Baby got his rifle; they stood guard until the others turned in, and then I was hustled out and started off, while they kept watch.

After we had gone, the old man and his son told Baby that one of his brothers had been killed by a white man; he thought it would be a good chance to get some one in return. However, they did not seem to feel angry with my men for running me off. I have always remembered the old man's name, which was An-nag-a-rah-ni. No doubt Baby saved my life that night, as he did at other times when we were off together. . . .

Two days later we were at Point Lay, where we expected to stay for a week, hunting; the deer were even more plentiful than when we came down. The first day we shot twelve deer, and the next one was spent getting them to our snow-house. While we were out, two sleds of Point Hope people arrived and camped alongside of us; they were on their way to Point Barrow to trade. They had no guns in their outfit, expecting to live on what they were carrying along with them and hoping to buy rifles when they arrived there, exchanging spotted deerskins and Russian tobacco for them.

We had several days of storms, and if it had not been for our caribou which we shared with them, the Tigera natives would have starved.

While at Point Lay, we killed sixty-four deer; we could not carry the skins along with us, so I thought to sell them to Nakowtalik for some of his spotted skins. When I made the suggestion, he only laughed at me, saying: "You can't take them with you; I can get them when I return; then I will have time to dry them and carry them all to Tigera." I knew he was right, but did not like his spirit, and thought that after we had fed him and all his tribe, while they were wind-bound, he might show a little appreciation for what we had done.

Not wishing to have him get the best of us, I started cutting the skins into small pieces. At this he laughed the more, thinking I was only playing. I cut first one and then started on another. Then he wanted to know how many I intended to destroy, so I told him all—that if he would not buy them, I wasn't going to let him have them for nothing. After I had cut up four, he believed me and wanted to trade me two of his skins for what I had left. I finally managed to get four good reindeer skins in exchange for sixty winter skins. I was satisfied, and he made a good bargain, as he was able to sell them all at Point Hope.

We all started together, but our outfit was traveling light and made better time than the others; soon we were out of sight, and we never saw them until they arrived at Point Barrow, a number of days after we had. Our first camp was Icy Cape, the next Kalumiktowra, and our third at Point Belcher (Sedaroo). We passed Wainwright, stopping just long enough to get water and rest the dogs for a while; the days were long and we made long stretches without camping.

We stayed in a native igloo at Sedaroo for one night, and an old woman living there thought she would be good to me, and knowing I had been without white man's grub a long time, she offered to make me a flapjack with what little flour she had left. As there was only a very small amount, she thought to help it out with baking powder, of which she had half a can; so she mixed it all together. As soon as this mixture became hot, there was nothing but holes, with a fine rim of flour around each. I thanked her just the same; she meant to be kind. From Sedaroo we took two days more, traveling to the station, and we arrived early in April, just before whaling time.

While I was gone, the boys had built the road and had the boats all ready. I talked matters over with George, telling him I thought I could get a native crew, fit out an oomiak and whale the same as the Eskimos did. Leavitt did not think anyone would go with me, but he was willing for me to try. In the village I found a native, Poka, who was barred from the native boats that spring, as his wife had died just before whaling, so he was forbidden to work in their boats. Poka was willing to go with me if I would do the same as the Eskimos did, and I could get some more crew to go with us.

The women worked in the whaling-crews the same as men, were just as good when it came to paddling, and did not seem afraid of going alongside of a whale, so my next recruit was Toctoo. I wanted Baby, but he was one of Billy's crew, and Billy did not want to lose him. I did get a boy that had come up from Point Hope with Nakowtalik, and then two more women agreed to come along, making a crew of six. Poka helped me skirmish a boat. It had to have a devil in it, so Poka furnished that; it was a piece of obsidian chipped to the shape of a whale, and had belonged to his father. It was supposed to be very lucky. Poka also managed to dig up a dried raven-skin, which all boats were supposed to have with them when out on the ice. Before we hauled out on the ice, we had an old man come over from the village to pour some water over the bow of the oomiak; he also went through some incantation that was meant to keep all evil spirits away from the boat.

Vicissitudes of whaling....A lemming migration of unusual extent.

The lead had stayed open all the first part of April, and whales were reported on the tenth. Appiyow had taken his boat out much earlier than usual, hunting seals. On the twentieth Appiyow caught a whale, and that started all the boats from the village; there was nothing more taken for a long time, in fact, not till May tenth, and then Joe Tuckfield and Fred caught a small whale. The season was not a good one, no one seeing many whales, and what were seen were going off-shore. All the old men said the ice was not right—there was a long point of ice somewhere to the south of us, where the whales were touching and were then going off. They thought if we went south, we would get whales, but no one wanted to start, as they hoped for a change. But no change came, and the men became discouraged, leaving their boats on the ice-racks and going ashore and staying several days at a time. Finally, Am-i-yu-na made a start all by himself; he was gone a week, and when he came back, he had a whale head of long bone in his canoe. Then everybody started, but it was too late, for most of the whales had gone by, and all hands came home without seeing any whales. Our boats were with the crowd.

The last few days of May the ice closed, and everyone was sure the season was over and many of the boats hauled into the village. But on the first of June the lead opened once more and a large body of whales came through; our boats were the only ones out. The lead stayed open several days, but no fish; so all hands went back ashore, this time leaving their oomiaks on their ice racks.

Just at the end of May, there was an immense migration of small mammals called lemming, coming from the southeast; it continued for quite a week. When they first appeared, they were in scattering bands; then they became more plentiful, until the whole land was black with them; they were so thick, in places, that it was hardly possible to walk without stepping on some of them. The country they covered was at least ten miles across, and the main body was four days passing the station, and they extended from two miles north to eight miles south of us. Traveling continually, they did not stop to forage, that I could see, but passed from the land on to the sea ice, and then kept going till they reached the water; even that did not stop them, for they jumped into the ocean, swimming offshore until they drowned.

We were cruising offshore several miles while the lead was open, and the lemming were dead in rows, just as chips and small pieces of wood collect in a tide-rip. We passed through many such groups. After the migration there did not seem to be many left around on the land; in the summer, however, there were especially large numbers of white owls and jaeger, and the Eskimos said that was because there were more lemming than usual, and that they were always present when lemming were plentiful.

The Eskimos say that every few years the lemming migrate, but not always in the same direction, nor at the same time of year. They will not stop for water or ice, but keep on traveling as long as they are able. Some of the older folks had seen many such migrations, but never before had they seen such numbers, nor such a wide stretch of territory covered. Millions must have drowned that spring, for of all that passed out on the ice, none ever came back.

On the sixth of June we expected to haul the boats in and give up for the season; the dogs and sleds were to come for us at ten in the morning. We had seen nothing for several days; the Eskimos had all quit for good the day before the ice closed, and we were right at the end of our road, about two miles from the station. The two whaleboats and my oomiak were all together, and there had been no movement to the pack all night. Just at seven in the morning the ice started moving up with a strong south current, and as we were all doing nothing, I got my crew and hauled the canoe to this hole, thinking to shoot a seal before hauling in; I shot the seal almost as soon as we arrived at the edge, and after picking it out of the water, I arranged the whale-guns so that they would be handy. The others all laughed at me, saying they had unloaded all their guns for good, as we were soon to start for home. Just as all the other boys had returned to their boats, a whale broke water in front of my boat. I had only time to grab a shoulder-gun and shoot, before it pitched to go under the ice. If I had not been alongside the boat, there would have been no time to get the gun, as the whale only spouted once.

After I had fired, I did not think I had killed the whale. Poka and Baby were the first to reach the canoe, asking me what was the matter, and if I had an accident, thinking I was fooling with the gun. They had heard the report and the bomb-burst, never thinking I had shot at a whale. While I was telling them all about it, Toctoo looked over the edge of the ice, and there was the whale, dead. About half of its body was under the ice; the flukes were just on the rim of the water, and it did not take me many seconds to get an iron into it.

This broke up our home-going for a while. Everyone had advice to give, and what we did not know about cutting up a whale would fill a large book. I had seen the natives do it at Tigera, and I had seen it done a number of times here the spring before, but to do it ourselves was another thing. Billy and Joe each had been whaling several years from the ships, but this was a different proposition; they each wanted to boss the job, and first they had us haul it one side of the hole, then as that did not suit, we hauled it back again. Finally we pulled it under the smooth ice, and as the moving filled the hole with slush, we could not even see where the whale was.

As soon as I had killed the whale, I sent Toctoo in to inform Leavitt and have him send word to the village. I knew the Eskimos would help, as they were short of whale-meat and would never pass up a chance to get a supply. It was not long before they began to arrive, and for a while they watched us fooling around, get-

ting nowhere; then Mungie told me if we would quit and leave them alone, they would cut the whale.

We left the work to the natives, and as soon as the whale was turned over to them, they hauled it out from under the ice, laying it at the edge along the heavy ice. Then they managed to keep the slush from its head long enough to get a line rove through a slit that was cut through the scalp. After reeving the line several times through the head and through a toggle in the ice, a large piece of ice was cut some way back from the edge, and rolled to where the whale lay, as close to the edge of the flaw as they could get it. This piece of ice was four feet high and nearly square; over this they placed the line, hauling it as tight as possible by hand, and then, using an iron pole, the line was twisted until the head was raised at least three feet above water. All this time a crowd of men was clearing the loose ice from the whale's body and head. As soon as it was high enough, they cut the lip and part of the tongue so they could get at one side of the whalebone, which they removed all at one time. Of course their efforts were crude, but just the same, if it had been left to us, the bone would have been there yet.

When one side of the bone was out, it looked as if they were stumped, for the ice was packed so hard around the whale we could not roll it; neither could we move it in any direction. This did not seem to bother Mungie in the least, for as soon as one side of the bone was out, all hands started cutting off all the blackskin and meat they could get at. Those that could not cut were hauling the meat back from the edge, and later it was all portioned out, everyone getting a square deal, even to the small kids. After watching them at work for some time, and seeing they were not making any effort at saving the other half of the bone, I asked Mungie if it would be lost. He only laughed at me, saying maybe the ice would move the other way; if it did not, they would haul the carcass under the ice and then cut out a hole large enough to pull the head through. He said not to worry; they would save all the bone.

Mr. Brower's first whale. . . . The Eskimos lend invaluable aid.

They did not have to go to all that bother, for in the evening, the current changed, the ice slacked, and it was not long before the whale was rolled on the other side and the bone removed, and before morning we had it all hauled ashore. It was a nice head of bone, weighing, when cleaned, 2220 pounds, and was worth about eleven thousand dollars. This being the first whale I had ever killed, I was some proud of myself. I have often wondered what we should have done without the Eskimo men. I don't think we would have ever saved any of it. We learned something that was of lasting value to most of us, for in years to come, we cut many whales out on that ice, in all kinds of predicaments.

By the night of the seventh everything was cleaned up; the boats were hauled in for good, and the pack was in solid and crushing, forming a great ridge where we had cut our whale. Poka had the oomiak all fixed up coming home; all our paddles were in place; the small slabs of bone were in the bow; he was boat-header, and as such was wearing the raven-skin over his back, and was walking behind, the same as any other man from the village would have done if he had been fortunate enough to kill a whale. The only thing that Poka did not do was to sing a death-song when the whale was killed. I asked him about that, and was informed it would not do any good, as the whale was killed instantly, and by a white man.

A few days after coming ashore, the dance and feast were given, as usual, by those that had caught anything. It was soon over, for only three whales were taken, not counting the small one Fred got.

The Arctic lemming, whose suicidal migrations are one of nature's many unexplained phenomena.

This was the last spring that many of the Eskimos kept their old whaling customs. Some few of the older ones did not give up as long as they lived; but the younger set adopted our whaling-gear, tackles, guns, bombs and all, even wanting hard bread and tea out on the ice. Tents they would not use for many years, not until after we began to hire them to whale for the station; then they wanted everything the same as we used. When the *nel-a-ka-tuk* was over, we all settled down to the work of cleaning the bone, and this took us some time; for besides our own, we had bought all of the other bone in the village, some of which had been left from the last spring.

We were still washing bone on what we thought was the third of July, expecting to celebrate next day. But about ten that morning, some one reported a ship eight miles offshore. At first we did not believe it, but there was the steamer coming from the south, and when she got abreast of the house, she tied to the ice and set a flag. We were all on the way out to her before this, some with sleds, but most of the crowd walked, using an ice-pick to help jump the small runways that had filled with water.

The steamer was the *Orca,* which belonged to our company, and that was the earliest date a vessel ever arrived at Barrow. Captain Bouldry had been the first at Icy Cape, and when the lead opened off Blossom Shoals, he came on through, hoping for a chance to get past Point Barrow. Now he was anxious to get back south, as there was no way to get around the Point at present; and besides, the ice was closing. Captain Bouldry wanted to leave two of his boats and crews with us, hoping they might have a chance at a whale while he was gone, as the *Orca* had to go all the way back to Port Clarence for coal; they had been so eager for whales that they were willing to take the last chance at the tender for fuel. Besides landing their boats and crew, Bouldry wanted to land something for them to eat when they went to the east. We did not want him to do that, well knowing that it would be hard enough work for them to get their boats ashore without fooling with a lot of provisions, which we could supply just as well. But the old man was stubborn and landed it on the ice just the same, telling Mr. Garvin, the mate, he was in charge and to get it all ashore somehow.

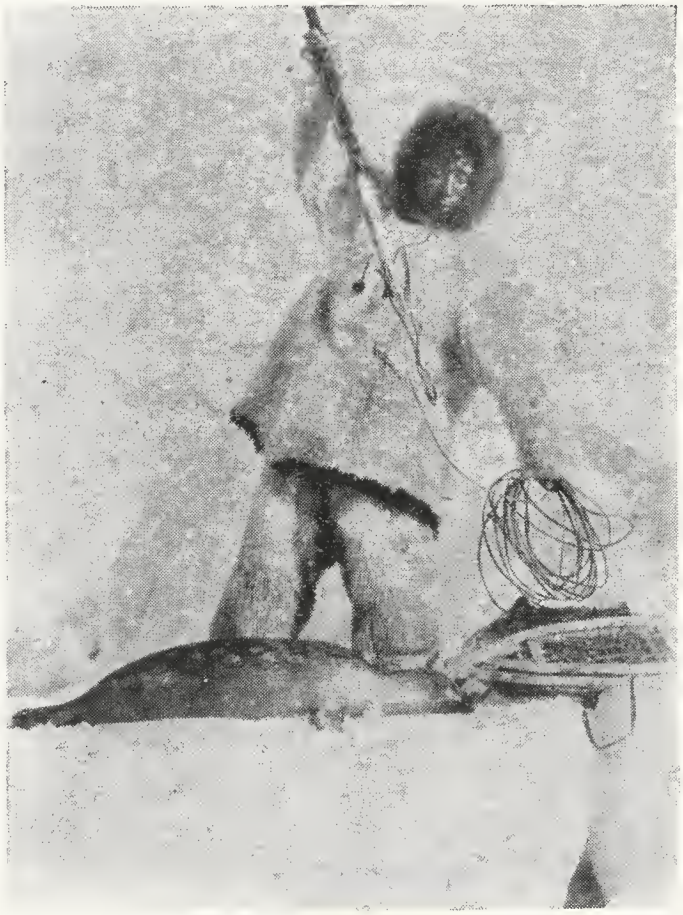
As soon as the grub was landed on the ice, the *Orca* steamed away south, and we did not see her again until early in August. Before she left, we found we were a day out in our reckoning, for instead of its being the third, it was the fourth of July. How we lost the day I never found out.

Garvin and Robinson, the two mates, at once tried to get their boats started to the beach; we tried to have them wait and have our boat-sleds brought to them, but Garvin would not delay. Everyone helped them, but the boats were so heavy that after hauling back two miles or more, they were so badly stove that we had to go for the sleds and a lot of dogs. We were all so tired out that no

one would go back for the grub until after a rest, and in the meantime the ice broke, carrying all the food away. It was well we had plenty of cedar boards, for it took Garvin over a week to repair the boats, with all hands helping him.

The Eskimos had been going to the east trading every summer, and often some of them went as far as the Mackenzie river, wintering either at Herschel Island or going up to Fort McPherson. Some that came back in the summer of 1887 told us that whales were numerous at Herschel and off the mouth of the Mackenzie every summer, that they lie around in the shallow water feeding in the tide-rips, where the water from the river met the salt water, and that they hardly ever went away all the time the ice was gone. They added that the Eskimos at Herschel were too lazy to go out and try to catch them. We were all excited over this. Bone was worth all kinds of money, and we wanted a chance to get in there with the sloop, and see what we could do. We were not fitted to go in there that summer, but if we had a new supply, we could try it the next year. Leavitt and I talked over the possibilities a number of times during the spring.

Finally it was decided to fit out a whaleboat, sending Joe Tuckfield in there with some Eskimos that had been to the Island before. He would stay all winter, see what there was to see, trade for furs, and if he got a chance, whale there and then return next summer with the news. He got away somewhere near July twenty-fifth, and we heard no more from him until the next summer.



The next ship to arrive was the *Baleana*, Captain Everett Smith, and the news he brought us was not what we had been looking for. It seems that some one had talked the Company into sending a new crowd to the station; and all the old hands, except Leavitt and myself, were to go. That would not have been so bad if they had let us go aboard the ships and work the same as any of their crew, but the orders were that the others could have a passage out, but on no account were any of them to be put on a lay, unless it was to replace some one. To make matters worse, all of the new fellows were Portuguese, except two. The old men were certainly on the warpath, and some of them decided they would not leave the beach on those conditions, and I sided with them. Leavitt was still in charge, but I would not stay, under the circumstances, much as I hated to part with him. I thought that, as I had got the men together in the first place in San Francisco, I would stay with them, and if we could get an outfit of our own, we would see what we could do for ourselves.

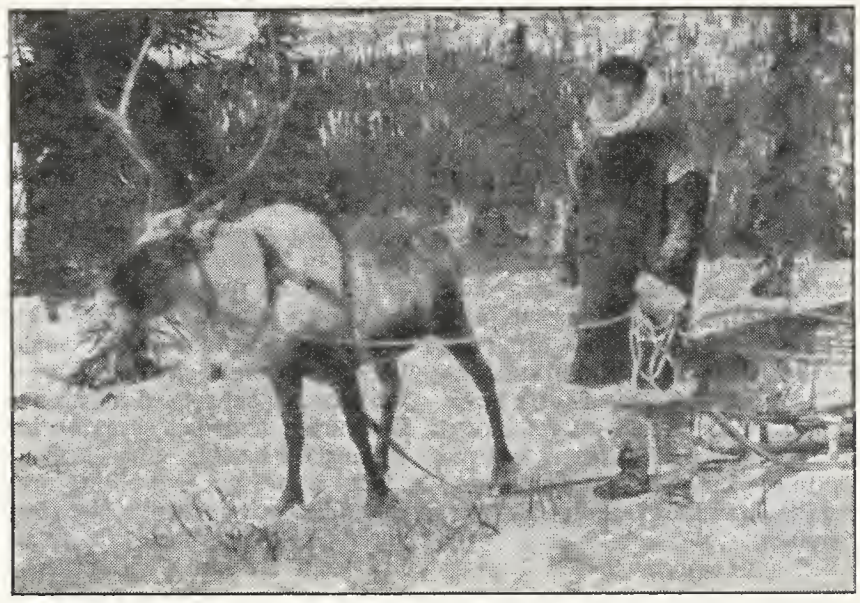
We discussed the matter at length, and finally four of us made up our minds we would stay. The others got chances aboard some of the other ships that wanted men. I had a tent and guns of my own; the others had their own rifles, and we all had sleeping-gear and plenty of skin clothing. Leavitt gave us some grub, and so we went to Berinak. That was the logical place for us; we had to see the different ship-captains and try for an outfit on credit, and most all the ships, both steamers and sailing vessels, were anchored at Point Barrow.

I was well acquainted with Captain Smith, of the *Baleana,* so he was the first one I tackled. He was willing to stake me, if I would go along with the Eskimos, live with them and whale with them in the spring. He was to get most of the bone, for the outfit he would leave me. I would not consider this at all, so I had to go back ashore and tell the others. They were all fine fellows; Conrad Siem was a German; Patsy Grey was an Irishman who had been a soldier in Arizona; Ned Avery was from Cape Cod, and I from New Jersey; all had been to sea at some time, and all could handle boats.

We camped at Berinak some time, trying first one ship and then another. Few wanted to take a chance on us; and if they did, they wanted everything there was in the venture. When we got short of grub, we shot ducks and sold them to the ships for more, but some of the ship captains would rather buy ducks from the Eskimos than us; it got so, for a while, that when we had a few ducks to sell, we let Mungie or some other native take them to the vessels. While we were camped here, the revenue cutter *Bear* came north. She was accompanied by the *Thetis,* which was rated a man-of-war, belonging to the Navy, and they both anchored at Point Barrow.

One afternoon two runaway sailors from the bark *Young Phoenix* came to our tent; they were tired and hungry, having been inland four days. One of them was a deep-water sailor, an Englishman; the other was from somewhere in the United States. Both of them were ready to go back to their ship, and wanted us to take them aboard. They wrote a note to Captain Millard, and I had an oomiak take it to their ship, which was anchored at the point. While they were waiting for some officer to come in for them, I asked them what made them run away in such a country as this. The sailor had no reason, except it was what he had always done when a ship did not suit him. The other said he was tired of being aboard a ship, had been shanghaied anyway, and thought all he had to do was to walk inland a short distance, find a ranch and work for a meal, and then pass on to another. Finally, he imagined, he would strike a town or railroad. When we told him what kind of a country they had struck, that this was the Arctic, they did not believe us.

Along in the evening the ship's boat came in for the men; the tramp wanted us to tie him up, to make it seem



as though he did not want to go back; but as he had written the note, we had him change his mind. As the mate was approaching the tent, the sailor told us that he was the meanest man he had ever sailed under, asking us to listen to what he would say to them. He said the mate would talk very nice, but that when they were aboard ship again, he would have them in the lazaret, in irons, for a long time. Sure enough, when the mate came to the tent, the first thing he said was, "My poor boys, how you must have suffered!"—at which we all had a good laugh. The mate took them aboard and put them both in irons.

The same night it began to blow hard from the southwest, and before morning it was blowing a gale that lasted two days. When the storm started, all the sailing-ships went around the point for shelter, getting under the lea of the sandspit, where the water is quite deep, close to the beach. Outside, a mile or more, it is shoal, not more than one and a half fathoms, in places. The ships had to go close in to the end of the point, then sail along near the shore; and ordinarily they would be safe. This blow was a stiff one, however, and three vessels were lost the second night. The first to go was the bark *Fleetwing;* both her anchor-chains parted, and bumping over the bar, she broke her back; the steamers were anchored outside the shoal, and they took all the crew off and put them aboard the *Bear* the next day. The *Young Phoenix* was the next; she dragged her anchor, fouling the *Mary and Susan;* then she also bumped over the shoal, and her crew were rescued by the *Bear*. The *Mary and Susan* was stove; and after the blow, she was hauled on the beach and all her cargo taken out; then the captains of the other ships set her afire, to keep her from drifting around the Arctic. The wreck of the *Young Phoenix* drifted offshore in the ice; and that same fall one of the steamers saw her far to the eastward, somewhere off Camden Bay, still fast in the ice. The *Fleetwing*, on the other hand, drifted off to the east of the point and seemed to have struck an eddy, for she did not go more than twelve miles from the point.

After the blow was over I went to Point Barrow with Mungie in his oomiak, to see if there was any way I could get some of the outfit that had been salvaged from the *Mary and Susan*. It was no use; the captains had bought everything at their own prices, and would sell nothing on credit. I was aboard the *Baleana*, talking to Captain Smith, who told me that the *Fleetwing* still had most of her provisions aboard, that when the men were taken off, only her boats and whaling-guns were taken—the weather was so bad that nobody wanted to fool around with her. The steamers, as soon as the blow was over, had all gone to the east, looking for whales, and the *Baleana* was just about to start.

I talked to Mungie and the other Eskimos that were in the boat and persuaded them to try to get to the *Fleetwing*, saying that maybe we could save something. They were not too willing to go, but Mungie said he would go if I wanted him to, and the others would only go if he did. Captain Smith tried to persuade me not to try it, but I decided to try it anyway.

The *Fleetwing* was drifting in rather open water, about twelve miles offshore. We did not have much difficulty in reaching her, but when we got aboard her, she was a sight. She was full of water, and it did not look as if there was any use trying to get anything out of her. Every rope in the ship had been cut, and as I wanted to try and sail her in near the beach, if possible, the first thing I had to do was reeve some wheel-ropes so we could steer. I soon had that done, and found that the rudder was in working order; then I spliced the lower fore and main topsail sheets, and set them. This was the best we could do, but it was enough to get her started the right way. The wind had hauled to the northeast, so we stood inshore with a free wind, heading for one of the sandspits ten miles or so from Point Barrow. While we were on our way, we rummaged everywhere to see what we could find, but the best we could do was to get some hard bread that was in the steerage. Then we found a barrel of black molasses and got that up out of the forecastle. Everything below-decks was under water.

On deck we found all her whaling spades and a lot of rope; and seeing there was nothing we could get, except sails and some other junk, off deck, I spliced the jib halyards and set the jib. All the time we were getting lower in the water, and it looked as if we might have to leave her before we got close in. Luck was with us, however, for we were not over a half-mile from the spit when she struck the bottom; and luck stayed with us for two days, while we were working like slaves, boating everything that was loose from the ship to the beach. Then I unbent most of her sails—that is, I cut them adrift from the yards and let them fall on deck. The others cut all the roping from them and boated them ashore, as I knew they would come in handy if we had to stay there all winter.

It took us two days to do all this, and then we had a sleep, before going back to Berinak, where the other boys were. They did not know what had become of me, thinking I had only gone to the point; but as I did not return, and they heard I had gone aboard the *Baleana*, they naturally imagined I had gone with Smith.

We loaded our oomiak with all the junk we could get in her and started home. At Nubook we hauled in to the beach, and Mungie thought it might be wise to have some one go and get some of the sails and other gear we had left behind; there was no one at the village, as everyone had gone aboard the ships, so we continued on our way. Just after rounding the point, a boat from the *Bear*, with Mr. Jarvis in charge, headed us off. Captain Healy had heard that there was some whisky left aboard the *Fleetwing*, and he did not want it to get in the hands of the Eskimos.

Knowing that we had just come from the ship, he had Lieutenant Jarvis overhaul us; we told him all that we had done, that we were trying to get enough to stay all winter on, so we could try our luck in the spring. Jarvis though we were foolish, seeing no one was inclined to help us.

The *Thetis* was lying just below us, almost at the station, and the boys were going to go aboard her that morning; instead, Pat and Con decided they would go back to the *Fleetwing* for another load, if they could get some natives to go with them. Ned and I were going aboard the *Thetis,* hoping we might be able to pick up something. We took a small piece of canvas and made a sail, using one of the dinghy oars for a mast; then we sailed down to the *Thetis*. I sure was a sight. I had not shaved for a week, and my clothes were all worn out. When we got alongside, I went up the gangway, and a quartermaster met me and asked whom I wished to see, and what my name was; I told him my name, saying I was from Point Barrow, and asked to see the Captain.

The quartermaster called a messenger to tell Captain Emory that a visitor wished to see him, and the Captain sent word for me to come to his cabin, as he was just getting up. Emory was a fine fellow, and he treated me like a prince. Calling his steward, a colored man named Merry, he told him I was to stay and have breakfast with him. I tried to excuse myself, but he insisted. I did not want much persuasion, however, for a meal looked good to me just about then! He asked all kinds of questions, was much interested in what we had been doing, saying if we were still inclined to stay, he would see what he could let us have in the way of food. Captain Emory had done many things besides going to sea. We yarned pretty near all day before I thought of Ned. I hoped he had fallen in as good quarters as I.

Leaving the *Thetis,* we went ashore to see Leavitt. George was sorry we had left him, and even said if we came back, he would let some of the others go. We told him no, but if we could not manage to get enough to live on, we would be glad to buy an outfit from him. This he would not promise. Next morning we went back to Berinak, and in the afternoon, Pat and Con arrived from the *Fleetwing*. They had their trip for nothing, for just as they reached the wreck, all the sailing-ships were leaving. The captains had been aboard her, and everything we had missed, they took—not only that, however, but they had gone ashore and taken everything I had saved, leaving not even a piece of old canvas. After stealing all there was to take, they had cut the masts out of the wreck, leaving them hanging over the ship's side. There were a number of things said that night that it was well those skippers did not hear.

Salvage from a stranded ship.... Friendly captains —and the reverse.

Three days afterward we had another blow from the southwest. This time the fleet was all at Point Barrow, except the schooner *Ino*. She lay a little south of Utkiavie, anchored close inshore, getting water. The gale came so quickly that they had no chance to get their anchors and stand offshore, before it was blowing too hard, and when they did try, they drifted onto the beach.

When we got there the Captain and his mate were sitting on the sand, making their log-books tally. Six of the crew were drunk; they had managed to get a five-gallon tin of alcohol, and were all laid out when we arrived, while the rest of the crew were just standing around, not knowing what to do. No one was aboard the vessel, except some Eskimos, who were helping themselves to what they could get hold of. When I asked the Captain what he intended to do, he told us he did not know, that the Eskimos had taken charge as soon as they could get aboard. We told him that as she was abandoned, we were going to take charge of her ourselves. The Captain did not care what happened; all he wanted was a chance to get aboard the *Bear* and get away from there; this was his first trip to the Arctic, and he hoped it would be his last.

Going aboard the schooner, we made the Eskimos put on all the hatches. They objected at first, for that was something new—they had helped themselves before. I talked to them a lot before they finally did as we wanted, and then we persuaded them to bring back all that they had taken off. As the *Bear* was still at the Point, I told them that Captain Healy would soon be down, and if they were caught stealing, there would be a lot of trouble for them. That settled the argument; they knew all about the cutter, and had seen the big guns. They were not looking for trouble.

Just as we got everything under hatches, sure enough, the *Bear* was in sight, steaming south. When she got abreast of the schooner, the Captain sent one of his boats in close to the beach with orders that if anyone wanted to go aboard, to launch one of their boats and at once. He was not going to wait long, as he had three wrecked crews aboard at the time. Lieutenant Jarvis was in the boat, and he told them to bring nothing except a barrel of sugar, as they were short of that. It was no time before we had helped them to launch a boat, everyone except those that were drunk wanting to go off, and they refused to leave.

As they were leaving the beach, the Captain of the *Ino* wanted to have the schooner condemned by Captain Healy. Jarvis replied that Healy had already condemned her through his spyglass, and for them to hurry up and get aboard.

Everyone was soaked in launching the boat through the surf, but we did not mind that in the least.

The sea had been high, with a heavy swell rolling in from the west. This washed the *Ino* well up on the beach, and as she was flat-bottomed, with not much of a keel, every swell hove her up more; we could soon walk to her side and not get our feet wet, as the sand had washed up around her from both ends.

As the schooner lay broadside on the beach, heading north, her masts at an angle of forty-five degrees, she seemed good to us pirates; all we wanted was a chance to have a look inside her to see what we had fallen heir to. We had to wait for a while, for the first thing we wanted to do was to get her on an even keel as soon as we could, before too much sand washed in around her. That would form a bed and make it almost impossible for us to move her. There were only four of us, but we soon had a number of Eskimos helping. They seemed to like us, and were as much interested in what we were doing as if they were going to own the schooner themselves. With their help, we first buried a great piece of driftwood on the top of the bluff, which was forty feet high and seventy-five yards from the water's edge; around this we rove a fifteen-fathom length of her anchor-chain, and from her mainmast head we swung out her cutting falls, hooking the lower block in the end of the chain; then we led the running part to a block on the foremast head and to the windlass on deck.

When all was ready, which took several hours, we had all the men we could get around the windlass, heaving the schooner upright. It was hard work, but all went along fine until we had a good strain on the tackle, and then it was slow work. The heavy swell helped us, and every time one of those seas struck, it helped to right her, we taking in the slack as the sea hove the schooner a little each time.

We worked all that night, and finally we had the *Ino*

on an even keel. Then, and then only, did we take time to look over our prize. Everything we could have wished for was there; the only things missing were whaling-guns, but they were the most essential.

The first thing we did after having a sleep was to clean out the staterooms, for we planned living aboard, and as everything was handy, all we needed was a cook. We acquired one whaleboat along with the *Ino,* and Con and Ned took the boat to Berinak and brought all our camp outfit to the schooner, where we set up housekeeping.

A bold attempt is made to dispossess the genial young pirates.

We did not see anything of the drunks for four days, and then they showed up and wanted to know what we were doing there, and what had become of the Captain and crew. We told them all hands, except themselves, had gone in the *Bear.* We now owned the *Ino* and intended to keep on owning her. The mate was the last to come aboard; he thought to run a bluff and ordered us off the schooner, saying he would take charge. He first started on Con, telling him what would happen if we did not get out. They were having some words on deck, as it was Con's turn to keep watch, and the rest of us were in the cabin. Hearing the loud talk, I went up to see what it was all about, and as soon as I interfered, the mate started in on me. We were having a hot argument when Pat came up. He was the smallest in the crowd, and the mate thought he was the easiest, so he tackled Pat—but when Pat was through with the big mate, he had changed his mind about what he was going to do to us. One of his Portuguese boat-steerers came aboard just as the scrap was over, and the mate turned to him, called him a vile name, and hit him in the jaw. Then we threw him over the side, telling him never to set his foot aboard the *Ino* again, but if they needed anything, to send one of the men for it.

That same afternoon they wanted some coal to cook with, and one of the boat-steerers came for it. I was on watch when he came, so I told him to open the hatch and get some. He was a long time getting it, and when I went to the hatch to see what he had been so long about, I found he had passed out a small keg of syrup, a case of fruit and a sack of sugar. I dumped them back in the hold, telling him to get his sack of coal and get out of there, and he was so rattled he caught up a sack of salt the ship had for salting walrus hides, taking it all the way to their camp before he knew what he was carrying.

The next day they made up their minds to start for Point Hope, with one of the crew of the *Fleetwing.* We did not know that the men had taken anything from the schooner before they got drunk, as we had never been near them to look them over. We thought all they had was their own personal dunnage, and maybe some grub. When they were packing their boat, we all walked to their camp; they had everything under the sun, and their boat would not hold a quarter of it. We fell heir to what was left. I saw one of the Portuguese had a number of whale-bombs, and so I asked him if he would sell them. He was agreeable, and he told me he also had some guns, if I cared to buy them. I certainly wanted them, but had nothing to pay for them. I offered to give him an order on my money due me from the Pacific Steam Whaling Company if he would take it. At first he did not want to risk taking an order from me, and would only take it if some one would indorse it for him. His chum told him that would be all right, as he would indorse it himself! I knew we wanted those guns badly, so I let his chum endorse that order, if it would make him feel better. I am sorry that the order was never presented for payment. Those poor fellows tried to reach a ship offshore from Point Hope that fall, and were never heard of again. There were eleven in the boat when they put off, and what happened, no one ever knew.

We were now almost fixed for the year. All we needed was more bombs, and we knew we could get them from Leavitt if we did not get them from a ship that fall. We were busy all the time, getting things arranged to suit us before winter set in, so had no time to go aboard the ships if we wanted to. George came and paid us a visit; I knew he would have liked to be with us, but he had to remain in charge of the station. In the middle of September all the sailing-ships usually start for their western whaling, but this summer they were a little late. One day they all came south and anchored off the station, and some of the captains came ashore to see Leavitt. They told him they were coming down and have some fun with us and take what they wanted, as we were only beach-combers, anyway. Leavitt advised them not to. He told them we were all pretty good men, and if they started anything, some one would get killed before they were through. They laughed at him, saying they would take a chance, as we were only four and could not do much. Leavitt told them we were all armed and some one was on watch all the time. Then he sent us a note by a boy. We were all ready, but they did not come, so they must have had a change of heart.

The *Thetis* had gone east after the first big blow, and the day after the sailing-ships left, she came back, anchoring just at the station. Some of her officers came ashore to see us, bringing with them Governor Swarnford, the first Governor of Alaska, who was their guest. They all had a good time, getting a number of curios from us. The Governor wanted some fox-skins and a wolf-skin I had, and he wanted to pay for them, if I would come aboard the *Thetis.* I told him to take what he wanted and I would be off in the morning for pay, but the *Thetis* was gone next day, and so were my furs. While the *Thetis* was to the east, the schooner *Jane Grey* capsized somewhere to the east of Point Barrow. Captain Emory heard of it, went to their assistance and righted the schooner. By good luck no one was lost, and all the crew were picked up by the other ships.

The first steamer to come from the east was the *Grampus,* Captain Dexter. I had been shipmates with him coming to the station two years before, and he and I were good friends. Fred Hopson was aboard his ship, but he had not shipped as one of the crew, as that was against the orders. The four of us wanted to get hold of Fred if we could, so I asked Dexter if he would let Fred join us if he was willing. Dexter did not care, and Fred was more than willing to join the crowd, as we were going to divide equal if we made anything. We also wanted another man, if we could get hold of the right one.

That night we took Fred home with us from Point Barrow. The next ship we got aboard was the *Baleana;* she came the next morning, anchoring near the station, and Captain Smith was pleased to know we had such a fine start. He let us have a lot of bombs, but he charged us enough for them. We would not stand for that, and then he wanted twenty slabs out of every whale we used his bombs on. We would not agree to that either, so we finally agreed to pay him double prices for his bombs, paying him the next summer in bone at three dollars a pound.

An involuntary gift. . . . "Profiteering". . . . Fred and Tom join up.

Captain Smith only stayed a few hours; then he went west, and that same afternoon the *Orca* came in and anchored. Captain Bouldry was leaving early in the morning, the last ship for another year. He sent a boat ashore

in charge of a Portuguese officer whom everyone called Red Frank, from the color of his hair. One of the boat's crew was Tom Gordon. He had been with Garvin that summer when they landed at the station; everyone liked Tom, and he liked the bunch pretty well. At any rate, as soon as the boat hit the beach, Tom came down to see us. The *Ino* was lying five hundred yards south of the village and about a mile from the station. While Tom was visiting us, some one asked him if he would like to stay with us all winter, and take a chance at the whaling in the spring. There was nothing in the world he would like better, and there was only one thing that could stop him; he knew that Bouldry would not let him go, especially as he was in Garvin's boat, and Garvin would have no one else for a bow oarsman. We talked it over with him, until he finally decided to desert. We promised him an equal share if we did anything in the spring. It was time for him to get back to the boat, as Frank was not to wait ashore, so we rigged Tom up in some of our skin clothing, and then he and Pat started inland to spend the night. They were not gone long, when Red Frank came to see what was keeping Tom. He was mad all through, for he wanted to be aboard in time for his watch below. Tom was not there. Frank accused us of having him stowed away in the schooner's hold. When we offered to let him search the hold, he would not do it, thinking some one would play a trick on him in the dark. After staying around for an hour or more, Frank left, going at once aboard ship.

At daylight next morning the *Orca* sailed, and soon afterward Pat and Tom came in. A few days later old John Shuman came from Point Barrow; he had left the ship he intended going out in, saying he had just as soon stay at Point Barrow as go outside broke. We hired him to do the cooking for us, promising to pay him in whalebone, if we caught any.

We had a good party and got along well; the six of us worked together three years without ever having a row. There were many things we needed. These we either had to make ourselves, or buy from the Eskimos. I was elected carpenter, and the first job I had was building sleds. When they were done, I thought I could manage to build a couple of canoes for spring whaling, as we had plenty of tools of all kinds. What we wanted was the material. In those days there was plenty of driftwood along the shore, and all one had to do was walk along and pick out the pieces he needed. That was Ned's job—that and gathering firewood. Pat and Tom were to go fishing at Evickshu, thirty miles from the coast, and I was going deer-hunting as usual. Ned got in some nice logs; I squared them up with an adz, then whipsawed them to the size I needed for canoe-frames, and put them away until spring, when I expected to build the oomiaks.

A congenial gang ....The new members learn Eskimo ways to fish.

The sleds I made from pieces of hardwood we found in the *Ino*. Our next want was dogs. I had Mark, but he was the only dog in the outfit. We made Con manager (at least that was his title); he had to do all the buying when anything was needed, and he liked that job, as he did not care to travel or hunt in the winter.

When it came time to start inland, the sleds were ready. I had one and Pat had the other. Con had bought us each a good team of dogs, so Toctoo and I went inland with Appiyow and his wife. We were not so fortunate that fall as the former years. The deer seemed to have left the country. The first night out we camped where Tom and Pat were fishing. They were not doing very well, as they did not know the good places to set their nets, so Appiyow stayed over a day at Evickshu to show them the best places and how to set the nets and to build small icehouses to keep the fish in. It was not long before they were expert fishermen, and they caught as many fish as any natives.

Our party traveled east from Evickshu, until we crossed the Kooloogarua, then the Eshooktoo river, without seeing a sign of deer; at both rivers Eskimos were fishing, and they told us there were no caribou in the country. After crossing the Eshooktoo, we traveled more southeast until we came to the foothills, without seeing a sign. In two days more, we reached the mountains, and followed them along their base almost to Point Lay, and in all this time, we saw nothing to shoot. Our grub and dog-feed was pretty short when we saw one lone buck, and Appiyow and I chased him all one afternoon. He kept traveling toward the hills, and did not even stop to feed. At dusk I turned back, but Appiyow followed his tracks all night, finally coming up with him the next morning. That was the only deer we got that fall.

We moved our camp to where the kill was made, and stayed there for two days; then we started for home in a straight line, making the trip from the deer camp in four days. The only hunters that got deer that fall were some that had gone up to Tashikpuk, a large lake back from Cape Halkett. If it had not been for them, we would have had to live on fish all winter, or use all our salt meat.

As caribou were scarce, the Eskimos hunted seal harder than usual. When the ice was in, the older men were out most of the time looking for blowholes in the new ice, and when they found one, they would stay there until the seal came to blow and then spear it through a blowhole, which was enlarged just enough so a spear could go through. Care was taken to leave no broken ice fall in the water, as that would scare the seal when coming up to breathe. Every man carried a low three-legged stool to stand on, to keep his feet warm while he was waiting for the seal. His spear was entirely different from the one thrown, for it had a short handle of wood, and the spear-head was set on a long curved piece of ivory eighteen inches in length, which was attached to the wood. There was a long ivory ice-pick attached to the other end of the wood, but not as long as the curved front bone. Both pieces were always made from mammoth-ivory, cut from the curve of a tusk that was perfectly solid; some of them were works of art, as the spear had to have a perfect balance. The younger men never seemed to use them; if they were sealing at a blowhole, they used their rifles, standing on their stool with the muzzle of the gun rested on their boot, ready to use at a moment's notice. The older men did considerable sealing with their nets when the ice and current was right.

The dark days passed quickly; the Eskimos had their usual dances and visited back and forth. At Christmas we had Leavitt to dinner with us. Old John was a good

cook; he could make the best things I ever tasted, and his duff was especially fine. We had saved a small bottle of brandy for the occasion, and we gave it to him, this to put in the sauce. When all was ready, John put on the dinner, saying we could help ourselves—he was going to make the sauce for the duff. That was all right with us; we ate our dinner, and then John brought in the pudding. When he tried to set it on the table, we could see there was something wrong. Every time he tried to set it down, he drew back and looked to see where to put it; after doing this several times, John said to Con: "Take some of those damn' lamps off the table—I can't find room for the duff." Then we knew what was wrong. Instead of putting the brandy in the sauce, he had drunk it! The duff was good just the same, and John was forgiven, and we all had a great laugh out of it.

Eskimo seal hunt .... Holiday hilarity. .... A native still.

In January, 1889, two families arrived from Point Hope. I knew them, and as we were in need of some men to whale with us, Con shipped them all. He also hired two more Eskimos from the village; they were good enough men, and glad to work for us, but they were taboo in native boats, for some of their immediate family had died that winter. If we had not hired them, they could not have worked until the next spring.

These fellows from Point Hope knew how to make hooch; they had learned how from some one in the Baines party the winter before, and it was a bad thing for the Utkiavie people, for from that time on, some one always had mash tucked away in the corner of their houses, fermenting. Their distilling apparatus was the most primitive; they took a large kettle with a tight cover and fitted a twelve-gauge shotgun shell to the top. This was fitted to a small kettle with a top, and a rifle-barrel extended through a bucket of ice-water from the bottom of the small vessel; the large one was the boiler, the small one the condenser, and the gun-barrel led the condensed alcohol through the ice-water into another receptacle. As the liquor dripped from the rifle-barrel, it was caught in a cup.

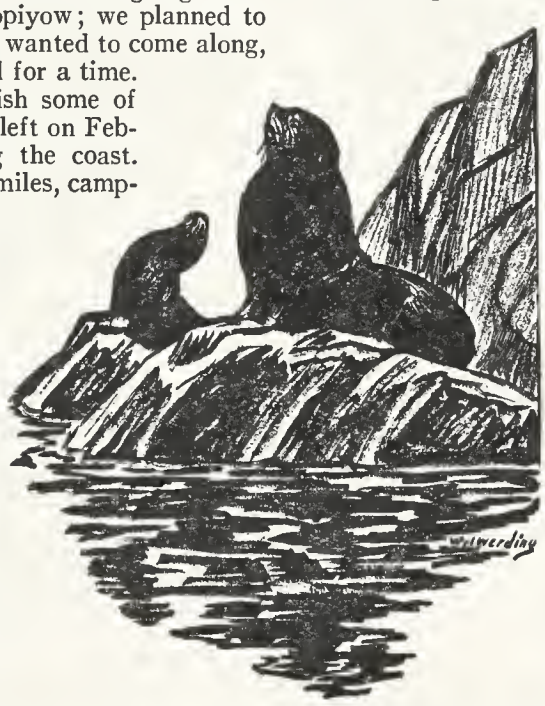
It was not until after I had gone hunting in February that their stills were started. Some of the people that had stayed in the village had even sold their clothes for the stuff, by the time we got back. I was going deer-hunting again with Mungie and Appiyow; we planned to start early in February, and Leavitt wanted to come along, saying he'd had enough of his crowd for a time.

I was willing, as he would furnish some of the dogs and other equipment. We left on February tenth, traveling south along the coast. The first day we only made twelve miles, camping early in the afternoon to dig up some seal that Mungie had buried there. We were taking it along for dog-feed. Sometime after dark, when the women were all outside cooking, there was suddenly a great commotion; they all tried to get through the door of the snow-house at once, yelling at the top of their voices, so I thought that a bear had come into the camp, though the dogs did not bark, as they would have if a bear was around. It was full moon at the time, and as soon as I could make out what they were saying, it appeared to me that they thought the moon was lost. When I went outside, I found there was a total eclipse of the moon; they had seen them before, but nevertheless they were afraid, saying the devil was around; if they stayed out while the moon was gone, something dreadful would happen to them. The eclipse only lasted a short time, and then we had the moonlight again, and everything was lovely.

We left next morning early, hoping to make Skull Cliff that day, camp there at night and then start inland next day. We made Skull Cliff all right, but we had to leave Leavitt on the way, for before noon his clothing was wet through from perspiration; if he had continued, no doubt he would have frozen himself badly. We left him at Baby's camp. Baby had built himself a house at Sinrau, where he was deer-hunting. Three of his younger brothers had joined him in the summer, and they said they would take George back to the station with their team. I was sorry to lose him, but he was soft, as he had not been out on the trail any since the first fall.

It took us two more days to reach the Kooloogarua River, where we made our first permanent camp; there was good deep water there, and we had our nets along, but did not set them, as Mungie said we would get no fish while the moon was full. We built a real Eskimo house of snow, like those we used to read about when I went to school, but the method of construction has not been published: A small rod is always carried, with a piece of ivory or bone; it is nearly five feet long, and is used to sound through the snow. When a suitable spot is found, a circle is drawn on the top of the snow, and blocks are cut inside the circle, care being taken not to break the outer rim; these blocks are built up around the circle, and slanted in. As the circle is completed, the first snow-blocks are trimmed, so when the others are placed on top the wall winds on a slant; one man trims with his knife, the others cutting more snow and passing it to the builder, who remains inside, building round and round. A perfect dome is formed, the last piece forming the key, which fits almost perfectly in the top. When the dome is finished, the fellow inside cuts down as deep as is desired, and the man outside cuts a trench to be used later as a hall. This is cut into the snow-house from the outside.

In a house intended for permanent use a shelf is left two feet higher than the floor of the entrance hall, where the bedding is spread, and the stone lamps are placed. After the house is finished and banked with loose snow, the hall is built, which is sometimes twenty feet long, in which all clothing, and all meat and other food is kept. The entrance to the house is through a hole in the top, at the end, with a piece of ice from the river forming the coaming; usually there is a drop of six feet or more to the bottom of the hall.



We did not make a finished house at one time, for we hunted most of the time, without much success, although Appiyow killed a few. After a while Mungie became jealous, saying he was going to leave us and go to another creek two days' travel away. The name of the creek was Ooming-muk, meaning "Musk-ox." Up to that time I had never seen any signs of musk-ox in that part of the

country, and I was curious to know if any of these folks had ever seen them. None ever had, but Mungie told that a long time ago there were plenty of musk-ox, and that when the caribou came, the musk-ox disappeared gradually. He said that when his father was a small boy there had been a time of great hunger at Utkiavie, and that most all the people died of starvation. His grandfather had come to this creek called Ooming-muk, to hunt, and Mungie's father told him that the old man had killed the last herd of musk-oxen that ever had been seen in that part of the country, ten in number.

Mungie left us two days later, taking his stone lamp along; it made the snow-house colder, and not so light, but as the sun was getting higher, we put another window of ice in the back and managed to get along. After he was gone, we had better luck, for the deer seemed coming from his direction, and Appiyow said Mungie was driving them in to us. One morning when we got up, it was blowing hard and the snow drifting so badly I thought we would have to stay home. Appiyow said no, that it was the best time to get deer, if one could only find them; so off we started. If anyone asked me which way we went, I could not have told, for everything looked the same, whether it was uphill or down. But Appiyow seemed to know every rise in the land, and never once did he stumble, while I was falling every few steps. The land appeared level, as there were no shadows, and made it hard traveling.

Hunting deer in a blizzard.... Eskimo pitfalls for the caribou.

Three hours or so after leaving the house we found a large herd of deer; it was just accident, our falling in with them, as we were not able to see any distance. By good luck we came up on the lee side of them, or they would have smelled us; they were traveling slowly to windward, and they did not seem to frighten in the least when we approached. We ran along with the herd and shot nine before they started off so fast we could not keep up with them. Appiyow told me that it is always easy to get close to caribou when the wind is strong and the snow drifting, for they do not seem able to see to windward. Still, they always travel in that direction in bad weather.

We went back over our tracks, finding the dead deer and skinning their heads and legs; the rest of their bodies would remain unfrozen at least twenty-four hours. I did not like the taste of the meat that had not been cut up; the others seemed to like it just as well as fresh. Starting for home, we made a straight line to the igloo, but I doubt if I could have ever found it by myself. Appiyow was never at a loss in any kind of weather.

In bad weather, if the snow was drifting, we always wore a drilling snow-shirt, or parka, to protect our fur clothing; for if it was not used, the snow matted the fur so badly it was hard to clean. White drilling was used, as it made one less conspicuous. Before white men came with their cloth, the only use the Eskimos had for their white-fox skins was making shirts to use in deer hunting; they were just as white as the snow, and the natives told me that if they were careful, it was possible to approach so closely to caribou in the winter that a good hunter was often able to get four or five deer with arrows.

Hunting was no joke in the extreme cold; it was almost impossible for me to shoot with a glove on; and if I took it off, contact with the iron froze my finger. I tried putting a small piece of deerskin on the lever of my rifle, but as that did not work, I finally had to use thin gloves inside my heavy mitts. The thermometer was around forty below zero most of the time.

One morning Appiyow called my attention to what seemed to me to be a cloud far off on the horizon, telling me that it was the steam rising from a large herd of deer. I did not believe him. He insisted, however, that he was telling me the truth, saying that the heat from their bodies and their breath was what caused the appearance of vapor; he said they were a long way off, and that they were not traveling, as the cloud stayed in the same place so long. He wanted to know if I cared to go with him that far, for we might be gone all night. I wanted to go, if he did, so we kept on toward our cloud.

It was just dark as we were getting near enough to see the caribou, and was not enough light left to shoot. Appiyow thought we had better build a small snow-house, and in the morning, if the deer were still there, we would try and get some. Making the house was not a long job; we made it small, so we could just sit up inside—the smaller the better, as we had nothing to heat it with except our bodies. We sat and dozed for a while, and then we talked for a while; when we got so cold we could not do either, we went outside and walked up and down until we were warm again.... That was a long night. It would have been still longer if I had been alone and lost. We talked of many things; he told me stories of some of his hunting trips in the years when he was a boy, and among others, he told how he and his father had hunted deer when they had no rifles; deer at that time were always plentiful. On one occasion they had been inland; the deer were traveling back and forth continually and it made hard hunting, as they had nothing except bows and arrows. When the deer were unsettled that way, the natives often made pitfalls in the snow; when the animals fell in the pits, they had to be killed quickly, or they would paw their way out.

A place was found, usually near the side of a small hill where there would be a snowdrift at least five feet deep, and a whole row of pits were dug, not over two feet wide and just long enough to hold a deer, and as deep as possible. Then blocks of snow were laid over the opening. All the snow that was dug out had to be leveled off to keep drifts from forming, for the least little breeze would soon cause the snow to drift so that the pits were useless. The snow-shovels used were chopped from a large piece of driftwood that had been split and whittled down so that the edge was not over a half-inch thick; it was beveled, and in the cutting edge was fitted a thin piece of ivory or bone, to break the hard snow. A pick, made from a piece of a whale's rib lashed to a wooden handle, was usually used to break the hard snow. Sometimes as many as forty or fifty pits would be made in a line, with several families working at them. They had to watch them day and night; and often, Appiyow told me, every pit would have a victim, after a large herd had passed over the hill. Then all the men turned to and killed the deer in the pits, sometimes shooting them with bow and arrows, and at others, killing them with short spears tipped with flint. When several families were together, the deer were divided equally among the men, and no one was short. If some native was out of food, the others always shared, even when there was nothing much left to divide. I asked him if it ever happened that when food was scarce, and some one had a supply, he refused to share with the others. He said that it had never happened in his village, and that

he knew of only one occurrence, and that was not so long ago.

It seems that an inland native, with his wife and two children, was camped on one of the rivers all fall; they had plenty of fish for a while, but in the spring, when the fish were all gone, the man had no success hunting caribou, and all became so weak from starvation that they could not travel. Finally both the children died. One day the man crawled away from the igloo a short distance, and seeing a deer, he was fortunate enough to kill it. Instead of taking part of it home to his wife, he hid it all in the snow, eating just a little himself; he commenced to get stronger all the time, until finally his wife found out he had meat. Then he brought her a small share, and they both lived, as the man got more deer. The woman never forgave him, and when she could, she left him. Appiyow said the man was still alive, and that he had never been able to get another wife, as no woman would live with him. . . .

Yarning the night away, daylight came at last. The deer herd was not far off, and we were fortunate in being to leeward of them, so we could approach the main part of the herd; there seemed thousands of them, scattered for a mile or more in a long line extending north and south. Evidently they were migrating to the northeast, for that is the way they went as soon as we started shooting. We killed seven, and it did not take us long getting the hide from one of them; and as soon as possible we cut the tenderloin from the deer, laying it on the snow to freeze. That didn't take long, and then we had our breakfast of frozen deer-meat. We had had nothing to eat since leaving home.

We skinned all the deer, making a snow-house over them to protect them from wolves and foxes; if the top of the house is left open, the foxes seem to think it must be a trap of some kind, and will not go near it; to make more sure, a small flag is left waving on top. With lynx, however, it is different. They are inquisitive and will go out of their way to see what a flag means.

An annoying prank. . . . Eskimos embrace the Demon Rum.

It was night when we arrived back at camp; the women were beginning to wonder what had happened to us. It was not long until we had a big pot of boiled deer-ribs in front of us, which soon disappeared. While we were eating, I noticed that Appiyow's boy was very quiet. When we had finished eating, we wanted to smoke. Neither of us had matches, so I asked Coo-nan, Appiyow's wife, to get me some, and then I found out why the boy was so quiet. That afternoon his mother and Toctoo were out gathering willow for cooking, and while they were gone, the boy stayed in the snow-house and amused himself by burning all the matches in the outfit. When his mother found out what he had done, she had walloped him plenty with her own rawhide belt. By good luck the oil lamp was burning, so she had been able to start a fire in the cook-house without having to use flint and steel. It made it bad for all hands, for we liked a smoke while hunting, and we had to use a flint and steel, which is not an efficient way of getting a light at forty degrees below. I had heard the Eskimos never whipped their children, but that was one boy who got punished!

The women had to go for the deer we had killed, so the next morning they were up pretty early, taking two teams with them. Appiyow told them where to go. I thought they would never find the place, but they only laughed at me, saying they were different from white women and that they could find their way, the same as the men. While they were gone, Appiyow and I shifted to a new snow-house we had been building off and on,

while camped there. All we had to do was move all our bedding and clothing through one door into the other house. A snow-house is very warm when it is new; then the snow absorbs all the water, like a sponge; but after a few days the house cools off in the night and the moisture freezes, forming a coating of ice on the inside; then every time it warms up, the house drips, and after a while everything becomes wet. Then it is time to move.

I did not have much longer that I could stay out, as I promised the boys to be back by the middle of March to start building our oomiaks, and I expected it would take me at least five days going home. So on the tenth Toctoo and I started by ourselves, taking a load of deer-meat along with us. I promised Appiyow I would send all our dogs and sleds out to him as soon as I could; he would need them all sometime in April, when they would be returning with their meat and skins.

We had an easy trip in, and the boys were glad to see me, or at least they were glad to see the deer-meat, as they had been out for a long time. Con had hired all the men we wanted to make up two boat-crews. One of them, from Point Hope, was a good carpenter; and while I was gone, he had all the wood for the two canoes shaped and planed, so there was nothing to do except put them together. First we had to have whalebone lashings made, which several of the old men in the village promised to do. It was at this time I found out about the whisky-making, for every time I wanted some lashings made, they wanted nothing except flour and molasses in payment; but when they had been paid, there were still no lashings. The flour and molasses were in the mash-barrel, and the Eskimos were mostly drunk. That was something new, for when a native promised a thing, we had been almost certain we would get it. I finally found two old men who did not want to drink, and they made all the lashings I needed. Our own Eskimos were just as bad, and every day or so, some of them would show up full, and we often had to put them off the schooner when they started to get ugly.

I told the other boys what I had promised Appiyow about sending him some men and sleds; they thought the same as I, that it would be a good way to keep our men away from liquor until we wanted them for whaling. Con fitted three of them out and sent them away. . . .

Every spring, in April, the Eskimos had a general overhauling of their whaling outfit. They gathered all the paddles, cutting-spades, hooks for holding the blubber, and whatever there was to fix, such as the sealskin floats and line, sleds and sometimes the canoe-frame. Everything was overhauled and put in shape for whaling. When the time arrived, all those left in the village got together and built an immense snow-house over thirty feet long and a little wider than a canoe-frame, where the canoes were worked upon. One could always see half a dozen men working away in these houses during the month of April. When there is a boat to build in the spring, it is done in such a house; and as everyone helps, it does not take long to lash one together after the frame is all

cut out. As I had to build two oomiaks, I had to have a snow-house; and as soon as all was ready, I started the first boat. The stern and keel were first lined up and lashed together with whalebone lashings. The stem- and stern-pieces are always the hardest to secure, as they are pieces of driftwood with the root projecting at an angle, thus forming a natural knee. They are chopped out with an adz. As soon as a good stem-piece is located, some Eskimo immediately cuts a mark in it, and then it belongs to him, especially if he takes the trouble to move it back a little from the water. They always have hopes of building a boat for themselves some day; if not, they sell the stern to some one who needs one. We were fortunate in being able to get hold of the four pieces we wanted that winter, for several Eskimos were building oomiaks, and end-pieces were in big demand. Lashing with whalebone was a new art to me; such lashings are the best anyone could have invented to hold a boat of this kind together. Having been a sailor was a great help, as they are always putting lashings on something or other.

Building oomiaks. . . . Fate of most babies born during a hunt.

The lashings are split whalebone which is scraped smooth and pliable; the longest lashings are used in the bottom, and four are used at each joint, where the stem and stern are joined to the keel. A great deal of care is used to keep the keel straight, for the shape of the boat depends on how the bottom is shaped. We did a good job, for when our boat was finished, it was the fastest one out whaling that spring. After getting the keel in place, we had to shape the bottom, using two long pieces and bending them to the desired form. This was another particular job, for each piece had to be just the same length, and were dove-tailed in the stem and stern. When they were in place and lashed, the bottom slats were lashed in place; then the ribs and rails were fastened to the bottom with rawhide and held in place and lashed with bone. The next performance was shaping the boat with the thwarts, and finally the long stringer-pieces were lashed on and the oomiak was finished, as far as the woodwork was concerned.

Acarina insisted we should have a charm built in the oomiak, or else we would have no luck whaling. I left it to him, as he was to be in my boat; he said he knew of a powerful charm, the same as his father used at Tigera; so he got a piece of obsidian, chipped in the shape of a whale, from an old whaleman in the village, and built it in the frame of the oomiak, in a small place in the joint of the keel and stern. It seemed to make him feel lucky, for he always prophesied we were going to catch whales, though he did not know how many. At any rate it was not so different from our own custom of putting a piece of silver money under the heel of the foremast of a new ship or smashing a bottle of champagne over the bow!

The covering of the oomiak was another job that I watched with great interest; the cover was bearded seal skins, and our boat took seven of them. We bought the skins from the village; they had been buried in the sand all summer, where they rotted just enough to have the hair slip off. We had to have them cleaned in the snow-house and cut to fit the canoe. Then the women sewed them all together with a double seam, and they were stretched and lashed to the frame; this was not a pleasant task, as the skins smelled badly, and matters were not helped by the fact that it was necessary to keep the snow-house warm all the time we were covering the boat. This we did with native stone lamps set in niches in the snow walls, using seal-oil for fuel, and it was wonderful how warm we could keep the place. Skins are sewed today as they were years ago, and the only thread used is sinew, braided in three strands the size of a small fish-line. The sinew for each seam is a little longer than the seam to be sewn, and the stitches are not drawn too tight, so that when the skins are stretched, the sinew will not break. When the hides are all lashed on, the cover should be smooth; if any pockets are left, the one that did the sewing is ridiculed and made to rip out the work and do it over again. When the cover is finished, the oomiak is put up on a rack in the sun, where it quickly dries and bleaches, and is ready for use by whaling-time.

While I had been away hunting, the Eskimos at Nubook had shut an old woman in a snow-house to freeze to death. None of the crowd heard of it until she was dead. That was the last time it was done here, or any place along the coast, though there were many children put away for several years after, especially if the parents were traveling. If a child was born and there was no permanent camp, he was exposed to the cold and soon perished. The inland people saved only a few of the children born, for they were usually following the deer, and it was hard for them to drag a lot of small children with them—at least that was their excuse. They all seemed fond of children; and when they had none of their own, they adopted one or two, but never until they were old enough to travel. If twins were born, one was always done away with. Some women with whom I have talked had had five or more children of their own and had never saved any; they had adopted some from the coast villages, however, usually orphans. The women often wanted to keep their babies, but custom was too strong, and they had to part with them.

We finished our boats in good time, and then we had to help cut a road through the ridge; we intended to go out light, taking only enough clothing for a change now and then as we got wet. We took no tents, and only hard bread and tea, not even sugar. For shelter we expected to build a snow-house. We had enough of hauling a boatload of stuff around. We took an old oil-tin, which we used for a stove, burning blubber; it made a hot fire, and we could always have tea ready in no time Tom, Ned and I were to be in one boat; we had three Eskimo men, and Toctoo was to go along, to keep our footgear in order, and cook if there was cooking to do.

Early in April the deer-hunters began coming in, their sleds loaded with meat and skins; the sleds all had ice-runners and carried as many as five deer easily, with a number of skins lashed on top of the load. One man and two dogs was enough to haul this load. It was all daylight now, and no one thought of building snow-houses when traveling in from the deer-camps; when it came time to camp, a circular wall was built, and all hands slept where they wished, using the deer-skins for beds. Appiyow arrived about the fifteenth, bringing us a good supply of deer; we were well fixed for meat, as all the sleds coming home passed our house, and everyone stopped and gave us some, usually a whole caribou. We put them away in an icehouse which the boys had built.

We went whaling on the twentieth of April. Leavitt's men were out several days before us, going out over their own road abreast of their station; they had to haul their whaleboats nearly five miles, and they were badly broken. There was some difference hauling around our oomiak, for we could go anywhere over the rough ice almost as quickly as on the level, and when we could not haul them on the sleds, we could lift and carry them around.

Two days after going out I became snowblind so badly I could see nothing. Toctoo led me ashore, where I doctored myself three days before I was able to see again. All we had was sugar to put in the eye; it made

them smart worse, but it did the job, and that was what I wanted. I lost nothing by being ashore, as the ice closed the same night and stayed closed for several days after I returned. On the night of the first of May the ice moved a little north, just enough to leave a chain of holes along the shore ice, and on the morning of the second, whales started to come through these leads. We had our boat at a hole not far from the end of our road.

It was along about ten that morning that a whale broke water almost in front of our canoe. Tom had the darting-guns; I had the shoulder-gun, and when the whale was close to us, we both let go at once. The whale never moved, and all we had to do was to haul it alongside the heavy ice and cut it in. Fortunately there were several canoes close to us, and all wanted new *muk-tuk* (the outer skin of the whale), so we had plenty of help. Anderson had previously said jeeringly that he would eat all the blackskin I could catch, so I sent one of the Eskimo boys up to his camp with a piece of blackskin. They made so much noise that we heard it at our camp, and it scared the boy so badly that he never stopped until he was back again. Our whale was not very large, but it looked good to us, and we were pleased to think we had caught the first one of the season. Two days later we got another small one, and we had to cut him ourselves. It took some time, but now we knew how to go about it, and it was good practice for us. At the cutting there was present an inland Eskimo who had just come to the coast, the first time in years. He sat alongside of a large piece of blubber and ate so much that he died right there! I think he must have burst something inside. The village natives would not touch him, saying it was bad luck, so the body stayed there until some of the womenfolks came for it with a sled.

Tom and I got our third whale on May ninth. The wind was west, and the young ice came in in great sheets, so thin, at first, that no one could go on it; when it reached the heavy ice, it stopped for a while, and then the pressure became greater than the ice could stand; it then doubled up in places and sheeted over the stationary ice; this happened a number of times, so it was not long before the surface was strong enough to hold a man, and a little later it was thick enough to haul our boats out to several holes making a mile or so offshore. Tom and I started with our boat to a hole that was just abreast of where we were hauled out. Appiyow was at the same hole, but at the other end; we had hardly placed our boat where we wanted it to be, than a whale broke water in front of us.

Calling a bluff .... Sad end of a glutton .... More whales.

None of our whaling-gear was ready; it was packed in the boat while hauling out. Acarina grabbed the bomb-gun, and quickly shot the whale as it was diving under the thin ice. I had no thought we would ever get that whale, so kept right on rigging our harpoons and darting-guns, and had just finished doing that when the whale came back in the same hole; it was badly hurt and stayed on top of water long enough for us to paddle down to him. Tom put a harpoon into him, and down he went, coming up the next time a half-mile away. Putting our boat on the sled, we started for where the whale was spouting; this time it did not sound but stayed on the surface, moving slowly from one end of the hole to the other.

We soon had another line on him; this seemed to wake him up, and when the bomb exploded, down he went, staying so long we thought we had lost him—but after an hour or so, he came back where we were, and this time we finished him.

He was a large whale, and our boat was somewhere south of us. It looked as if we could do nothing by ourselves. There was a heavy piece of ice at one side of the hole, to which we towed our whale. Then we cut a score in the ice for a slide, and we managed to get our tackles hooked onto the whale and tried to haul it high enough to get at the bone. We raised it only half as far as we needed, and then could not move it a bit, so we started cutting off the lip, hoping to lighten it some. Just then the boats south came over to help us; they heard we had a large whale, and this meant a lot of blubber close to the road.

Finish of another whaling season .... Fishing and hunting.

When we had started work, Toc-too had gone ashore for our sleds.

While there, she had told the others of our whale, and long before we were finished working, the sleds were out and all our bone was hauled back onto the heavy ice. The women hauled all the meat and blubber that belonged to our boats to the same place. After we were through, every particle of the meat and blackskin was divided equally. We did not get any more than the other boats, except the small, which always goes to the boat-header, and is eaten at the *nel-a-ka-tuk*.

My boat caught no more whales that spring; Fred and Pat killed a large whale for an Eskimo late in May and received one hundred slabs of long bone for their share. That wound up the season.

It was not long after coming ashore that we had our dance; this was to be a swell affair, and all our Eskimos were as much elated as we. Our dance came off first, for we had caught the first whale, although this is not always the custom.

When the dance was over, our crowd started to take the deck off the schooner, for we were going to build a house on top of the hill, fearing if we used the schooner all summer we might lose our home, or we might have a heavy crush some winter and be buried under the ice. We worked nearly all the month of June, breaking up the vessel and getting all the lumber onto the hill.

Tom Gordon and I were to go inland hunting with Mungie and another native, planning to start from the village near the first of July. Taking our oomiak on a sled, we hauled the boats up the coast to Berinak on the sea-ice, then hauled them to the mouth of a small river emptying in the big lagoon fifteen miles from the shooting-station.

As we neared the mouth of the river, it was all open. The river had broken loose the night before; so hauling in near the shore, we put our boats in the water and paddled into the mouth, where we soon had all our dogs harnessed and towing. This was better than hauling over the ice, and we traveled up the river eight or ten miles, then making a portage of one hundred yards, we came to a long lake which extended east as far as I could see. We had good traveling to the eastern end of the lake, and then it was all we could do to keep from going through, but we finally reached a bank where we camped for the night. Appiyow, the Eskimo I had taken with me, was the lucky hunter the first day, getting two fine fat caribou. Mungie, as usual, became jealous, saying he thought he would go by himself—that we could get along without him. Next morning he was up before anyone else, all ready to start, saying we could follow as soon as we had brought in our deer; he would be camped at the mouth of the river, fishing. So we let Mungie go, and two days later we floated down the Aculluly to its mouth, where we stayed two days fishing.

As quickly as the streams open, the fish start running up to the lakes where some of them spawn. Our first stopping place was a small bay, and running into the bay was a little creek just boiling with fish, mostly of

the large variety; all were trying to ascend the stream at once. There were so many, this was impossible; they crowded the bars, and the whole bay was packed. I had never seen such a sight before. When we had got tired of living on fish, we set out again, and sailing the whole length of the lake, we came to a creek leading into the Kooloogarua River at Polliya. Along the lake shore we saw two herds of deer, and we stopped long enough to shoot three, which we soon cut up and took along with us. From Polliya we ascended the river ten miles or so to another small tributary, where we intended hunting all summer. Hardly had we reached Pi-you-a-wig, when bad weather set in; it rained so much everything we had was wet, and stayed wet, for ten days, and to make matters worse, we could not find deer. When our meat was gone, we had to live on fish, and there were not many of them. The willows were so wet it was almost impossible to make a fire, and the only two fine days we did have, the mosquitoes nearly ate us up. That settled us, and we started home, with a continuous rain following.

We got back to Utkiavie early in August—and mighty glad to get back. The ships were all there; Leavitt had left, and my old friend Woolfe had come to relieve him and to get rid of all the Portuguese. The *Bear* was at anchor close to the station, discharging lumber for a refuge-station to harbor shipwrecked sailors.

Right after whaling was over, two of the men at the station had left, thinking they could get an outfit and whale for themselves. Antone Bett was one, and the other was a Portuguese we called Joe. They had gathered driftwood and built a shack at Berinak, and then they offered to help build our house. Con had taken them on while we were gone. The house was pretty well along by that time; all the outside was up, but we wanted more lumber to finish the inside, and were expecting to rip some more planking from the *Ino*.

This last winter in New Bedford, the whaling owners had a bill passed at Washington to have a House of Refuge built at Point Barrow; this had gone through all right, but the money had not been appropriated, so the owners had advanced the money and bought the lumber; the house was framed in San Francisco and the *Bear* had freighted it up. When I arrived home, they were landing the lumber with men from all the ships helping. The ship's carpenters were to help put the house up, under direction of the first lieutenant of the *Bear*. After this was done, Lieutenant Breuner had a lot of spare lumber which we bought from him for some fox-skins, so we had enough to finish our house, and then I built a room for myself and Toctoo.

When Woolfe relieved Leavitt, he had orders to get rid of the men that wintered there; they were getting the same dose we had. The Company was intending to send Leavitt back with an entirely new crowd the next year. Woolfe just shooed those men off the beach, though some did not want to go, saying they had signed for two years. Anderson, especially, was inclined to stop anyway; and to make things worse, all the ships were there with boats ashore all the time, and to hear some of the things that were said would have made most anyone mad. They had fitted up the sloop *Spy*, expecting to take her east and try their luck whaling, having done nothing in the spring. When Woolfe had got rid of his men, he offered us the use of the *Spy;* we had to use our own whaling-gear, and if we caught a whale, we were to give him a quarter of it for use of the sloop. We thought it over and finally agreed to take her as soon as we could get our house finished, which would be in two or three days.

Completion of the "community house." . . . Offer of whaling-ship.

After the ships had gone, I hunted for a while, going inland as far as the mountains. Deer were not plentiful, so Appiyow thought he would go into the village and try his hand at seal-hunting, saying he thought it better to hunt seal than to stay out where we got no meat. I returned to where Eshooktoo empties in the Kooloogarua and stayed with another Eskimo, Takpuc, a young fellow that had just married; they were glad to have Toctoo and myself stay with them, fishing. Right where the two rivers joined was a large stand of willows, and it was a great place for ptarmigan. Fish also were abundant.

Strange birth-customs . . . . Appiyow turns to making "hooch."

At our camp was a man and wife. The woman had given birth to a child just before we came there, but the baby did not live; the woman seemed to be getting along all right, and if she had been allowed to stop where she was a little longer, would have come through. Her husband was a surly fellow, however, and seemed to feel hurt to think his wife could not get around as well as usual. He wanted to get into the village to make hooch, and insisted on the woman traveling along. They reached the village, but two days later the woman died. One of the devil doctors said she must have walked on the river when no one was looking, as not many women died just because they had a baby! There were not many like that native, I am glad to say, for most of the men treated their women with a lot of consideration at a time like that.

When a woman was about to give birth to a child, she was never allowed to do so in a house or tent where anyone was living. If in the summer, a small tent was made for her; if in the winter, she was put in a snow-house. She was all by herself, and no assistance was given her, though she was allowed to have a deerskin to lie on. If it was the first child, some old woman would stand outside and tell her what to do. . . .

Takpuc and I were having such a good time, we wanted to stay, until the days got so short we could not hunt to any advantage; we were out of several things, and so we started for the village for supplies, taking two days to go and the same to come back. Things were not so nice in the village, as in other winters, for most everybody was making hooch. Appiyow had started a still and he was getting rid of what he had laid aside for several years; he kept up making whisky for a number of years, gradually losing all the prestige he had in the village, and this was the last time I hunted with him. It is a good many years since these events happened; as I write, today is the tenth of October, 1927; yesterday was Appiyow's funeral; he died here at Barrow in our hospital from the effects of a bad rupture he acquired in the days when the hooch mills were in full blast. But at his death, he was a deacon in the church. . . .

Along in December, we had to go home. The fish were mostly in the deep holes and we were not catching enough to feed ourselves. The first night after breaking camp, we had to build a snow-house in the dark; our sleds were heavy and we did not make the time we expected to. While we were building our house, I heard a great rumbling off to the west of us; for a time I did not know what to make of it. The wind was from the west, blowing fresh, and Takpuc told me the noise was the ice crushing offshore—that when the wind was in the right direction, sometimes you could hear the ice piling and grinding for many miles inland. Since that time, I have heard it a number of times. Sure enough, when we got home, the ice was piled in a great ridge all along the shore. It was a good thing we had moved from the schooner to the top of the hill, for what remained of the *Ino* was buried under the crush.

Utkiavie is on a high bluff, the highest place along the beach for miles. A few years before we came, there was a strong west wind, the current was right, and together they forced the heavy ice almost to the beach; the inshore ice is generally not so thick, but this was forced up on the beach on to the top of the bluff, right in the village. Some of the houses were close to the edge, and they were crushed; it happened in the middle of the night, and people sleeping in the houses were killed by the falling ice. Mungie told me that his father was one of those killed. . . .

I did not go hunting the spring of 1890. I had a lot of carpenter work to do fixing all our gear that had been broken in the last year. Most of the time I had been doing something else or going somewhere; now it was my turn to stay home. The deer came in close to the coast that spring, just as the sun returned on the twenty-first of January. Between working and hunting, time slipped along until the latter part of February, and then I had to make a trip to Wainwright after a lot of hides we wanted for covering our oomiaks.

Toctoo and I were to go alone, but one of the young boys working for us wanted to go along, so we took him along. We made good time to Wainwright, where we stayed with an old man called Ivuk. His house was all panels of hardwood which he had saved from the ships wrecked near there years before. He even had one panel that had a mirror in it, from some ship. The wonder was that it had lasted as long as it had. Ivuk was proud of his house, keeping it quite clean, for an Eskimo; his women were all the time washing the floor.

After I had bought my hides, Toctoo wanted me to go to Icy Cape. Her brother, Baby, was there that winter; he and his family had come down in the fall so they could whale there that spring. Having nothing to make me hurry home, I consented, thinking I might pick up a few furs on the way. It took us three days getting there.

I had not expected to stay more than two days. For once I had planned wrong, for the morning after arriving I was laid up with rheumatism—at least I think it was that, for my legs pained me so I could not travel. This lasted for a week and then they got better just as suddenly as they ailed. The day after I could travel I made up my mind it was time to get going. We had nothing except a small quantity of hard bread left and not a bit of tea or sugar. It meant I had to make Wainwright in one day.

When we started, Baby wanted to go along, and there was a woman with a little boy that wanted to go as far as Wainwright. They had a sled of their own, so I did not mind, knowing they would have their own grub. Early in the afternoon it began to blow, getting worse all the time. We were traveling on the sand-spit, where the snow was not deep, and sometimes we took the beach where the wash in the fall had frozen smooth, making an excellent trail. All the afternoon the wind increased till it was blowing a blizzard; we could not travel against it, and we were so far from Icy Cape we could not turn back, so there was nothing left except to camp. Baby and I tried building a snow-house. It was no use; the snow on and near the sand-spits was thin, not over eight inches thick anywhere. When we tried to cut blocks of snow, it was no time before it was gone. As fast as one would cut and put on edge one of these blocks, the wind ate it away before we could get the second one in place. Seeing we could make no headway, we took some willow sticks I was taking to Wainwright for Ivuk, and putting these near the sled, one end in the snow, we took our sled-cover for a tent, first placing one side under the sled-runner and letting the cover flop over the tent-sticks, then all hands sat on the other edges of the cover, holding it down; the sticks bent half round and made a kind of shelter, and then we were warm enough. Our dogs had to stay out in the blizzard, where two of them froze to death before long. I had two that were half-breed, and they could not stand the storm like the Eskimo dogs; they only curled up and seemed to sleep, getting up every once in a while to shake the snow off themselves. Before long, it began to get colder, and before morning it was colder than I had seen it before.

We stayed five days in that shelter, and glad enough we were to be out of the wind. The second day Baby crawled outside looking after the dogs; they were all around, just as close to the tent as they could get, no doubt trying to keep warm. Going a short distance, Baby found the carcass of a walrus that had been washed there in the summer. While he was trying to hack off a piece to eat, a bear came up close to him; the rifle was under the snow, but he could not have shot it anyway, for the bear left as quickly as he had appeared. We had absolutely nothing to eat in camp, so the Eskimos ate the rotten walrus meat, but I could not keep it down. Then I went out with the ax, and finding one of the frozen dogs, I cut some off from his hindquarters, skinned it with the ax and ate it raw. The first few mouthfuls were hard to keep down; and then as it did not taste bad, I made quite a meal. The others ate some, but seemed to prefer the walrus, which they shared with the dogs; the second meal I had of dog was cooked in a small tin can over a stone lamp in the tent, using the oil from the carcass.

Walrus meat versus dog.... An ungrateful fisherman.

The fifth day the wind let go and we were able to start to Wainwright. We made the village in the afternoon of the next day, and I went at once to Ivuk's igloo, but all hands were off fishing for smelt. They had nothing to eat in the village; the ice had been closed a long time, and no seal had been killed since fall. Deer were not to be found, and all there was to eat was the fish they were getting day to day, barely enough to keep them going.

The first man to come home with fish was Allishura, a fellow I had given fish to in the fall; he had quite a sackful. He would not give me any, but wanted to sell me a few for myself. This made me mad. I would not buy from him even if I had to go without. Ivuk's womenfolks said he was always that way—that he never gave to anyone but always wanted to sell. I thought of the time he was hungry, when Takpuc and I had given him all he needed, and told him about it, but it made no difference. Shortly after, the other men came home; there was plenty for all that night, but nothing left for the morning. Everyone got up early so they could catch their breakfast, which was eaten raw and frozen on the inlet, two miles away.

I stayed here three days, hoping to catch enough fish to carry us home. The day after I had arrived at Wainwright, a man called Kyooktoo, knowing we had nothing to feed our dogs, had gone out on the ice to see if he could manage to raise a seal for me. He did this without telling me he was going. The third day he came in with a seal which he had shot through a blow-hole, a long way out; it took him all one day and part of the night hauling it in from where he had shot it. Kyooktoo gave me the seal, and would not accept anything for it at the time; but I paid him well later, much more than what the seal was worth. I did not pay for the seal, but for what he had done for me. I was now ready to start home with my load of hides. It took me three days to go to Utkiavie, staying the first night with some Eskimos at Ping-a-sug-aroo, where they had a couple of freshly killed bears. This helped us out, and two days later we got home.

These interesting sketches of actual life in the Far North are continued in the forthcoming May issue.

Bloodhounds Beats Brains

Latham Hooper's pardon from the penitentiary hung proudly framed over his mantelpiece. When this trophy was stolen, he called in the dark detective Bugwine Breck—and then things began to happen.

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

BUGWINE BRECK, five-foot assistant sleuth in the dusky Columbus Collins Detective Agency, was just reaching for a cigar when his tall superior stepped on his fingers.

"Dis here's my gutter, on dis side," reproved Mr. Collins. "And a boy dumb as you is can go stand over a trash-pile, is he crave hisse'f a smoke."

Mr. Breck wrung his mashed digits ruefully. "*Wuz* aimin' to slip dat cigar to my daddy-in-law," he clarified his position. "Den maybe he loan me de two dollars to take Geranium on de railroad 'scursion wid. I aint got two bucks."

"Ought to have thunk about all dat and gone slow befo' you marries her," reminded Columbus. "Provin' some mo' whut I been tellin' you all time—dat as a sleuth you is slippin', from de ears up—you and dat old white pooch you calls a bloodhound!"

"Takes me de five bucks in ones, so can pay off Columbus before he busts a lung loose hollerin' for his two dollars back!"

"Bloodhounds beats brains," retorted Bugwine stubbornly. "And huccome you says I's slippin'?"

"Had *you* locked up three days as de crook, last time you goes out detectin', aint dey?"

"Couldn't git nobody come round and say dey knowed me—"

"Not after dey finds yo' client's watch on you, you means—"

"I wuz fotchin' it back to him—"

Columbus snorted scornfully.

"Dat whut dey all say! Tells you, you's so dumb you's losin' out. One more mess like dat one for me to git you out of, and as a detective, you is washed up, you and dat pie-eyed poodle of yourn!"

"Got to have a bloodhound in de detectin' business—and Coney Island got bloodhound blood in him," persisted Mr. Breck obstinately. "All time sniffin' about—"

"Yeah! Also, cur, collie, Airedale, bull-dawg, bird-dawg, and lap-dawg!" jeered Columbus. "He's dumb, too—from 'sociatin' wid you so much. Dat old white dawg aint even *look* like a bloodhound—no more'n you looks like a detective, wid dem two left shoes, and flap-topped hat, and speckled necktie on you!"

Bugwine examined the place where the mule had stepped through his straw hat, and said nothing in a big way. Some day he was going to show Columbus something! But in the meantime, there was no escaping the knowledge that Geranium had married him because he was a detective. And if Mr. Collins made good that threat to fire him, he was liable to get *un*-married in short order. Not to speak of the necessity for financing that excursion of Geranium's, if he cared to remain in good and regular standing around his own home.

"And aint no science to yo' work, neither," Columbus resumed the picking of flaws. "Is you *had* no mind, be good thing to get dat new mind-readin' nigger in de alley to 'xamine all dem knots on de outside yo' head: maybe he could see whut de matter wid de inside."

The white-coated Coney Island sneezed twice and began the harrying of fresh territory with a frantic hind foot.

"Better lay off dem fleas, dawg, and scratch yo' brains a spell," advised Columbus sourly. "Like I gwine do now, huntin' some way to git up some business for dis agency!"

Left behind in detective headquarters, Bugwine's lucubrations were shortly interrupted by a loose-lipped, loop-legged darky in blue jeans and evident misfortune, hesitating white-eyed in the doorway.

"Dis here de detectin' place?" he questioned anxiously.

In practically one convulsive movement, Mr. Breck flashed his tin star, pointed out Columbus' framed correspondence-school-of-detecting diploma upon the wall, and kicked forward the soap-box reserved for cash clients.

"Somep'n done been stole from me—" essayed the caller as he sank upon the box.

A crime—a client! Bugwine had business brought in to him while Columbus beat the bushes for it! Dumb, was he?

"Sho is come to de right place!" these thoughts warmed Bugwine's voice as he swung into salesmanship. "Uses de latest sciumtific methods and dawgs. Bloodhounds beats brains—and us got both! Gangway for suhvice! Whut yo' right name?"

"Latham Hooper—"

"Kings hires us to watch de queens—"

"Aint crave no queens, n'r aces neither. Craves git my pardon back—"

"Says *huh?*"

"Somebody done stole de pardon de Gov'nor gimme."

"De *pardon?*"

"Yeah. Whut de white folks gimme last time dey lets me out de big jail-house. I frames it and hangs it up by bright green cawd over de mantelpiece in my front room, whar-at eve'ybody can see it. Sho is make dem Lick Skillet niggers jealous!"

Mr. Breck's eyes glistened sympathetically. A pardon from the penitentiary *would* have looked noble hanging over a boy's mantel! Governor's autograph and all—

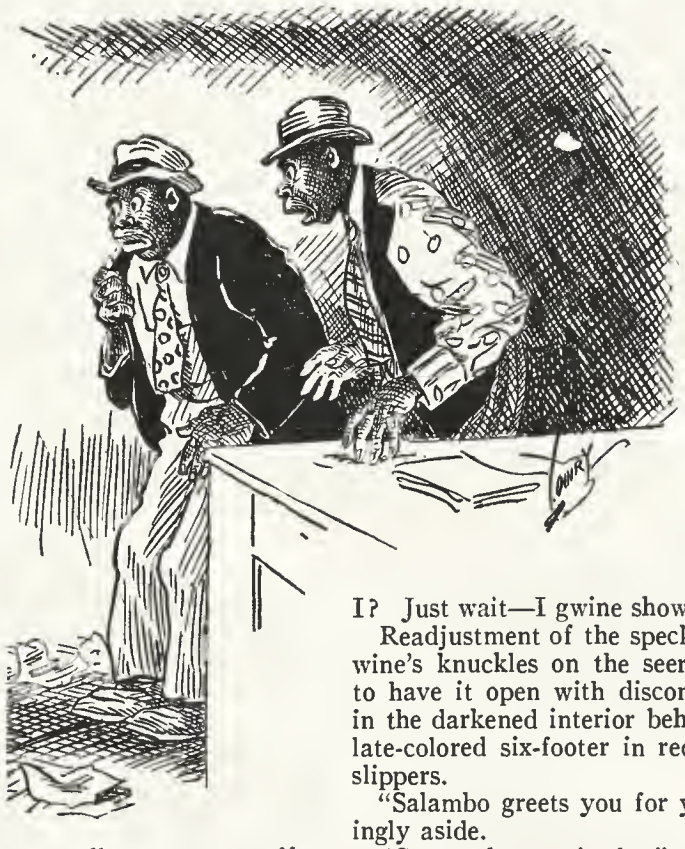
"How bad you crave it back?" he led up to the subject of fees.

"Wuth five bucks—"

"Five bucks is right, if it's C.O.D.—meanin' 'Cash on Delivery of de Crook'."

"Aint do business no other way," the prospect misunderstood him. "No pardon, no pay."

Bugwine let it lie. "Done hired yo'se'f Bugwine Breck, de Human Bloodhound!" he closed while the iron was hot. "Rally de five handy; gwine to owe it to me in no time now! First stop's de spot marked *X!*"



En route amid clatter of bear-trap and sartorial splendor of the speckled necktie to the scene of the crime, Mr. Breck had but brief time to check up on his business. But it was improving. Slipping, was he? When he already had a case, and Columbus had the air!

Arriving at the ravished home of Mr. Hooper, Bugwine grew busier than a centipede on a hot skillet. Admiring murmurs from a gaping gallery arose gratifyingly as the assistant sleuth proceeded to mysterious measurement of everything in sight: like Columbus, he always measured everything. Equally mysterious inspection of yard and floors through the firm's lenseless magnifying-glass followed. But clues didn't. A baffled look settled between the Bugwinian brows.

"Now whut?" demanded his client.

Mr. Breck jangled the bear-trap that served the firm as handcuffs, adjusted his cherished tie, and wondered the same thing—until memory came to his aid: "'Spectin' impawtant developments inside fawty-eight hours," he quoted, just in time. . . .

Yet, once out of the limelight and headed back toward his headquarters, old doubts—and remarks—re-arose to dim and disquiet. He had gone through all the right motions, yet where was he?

"Lay off dat garbage-can, Coney," he snapped irritably at his four-footed aide. "Rally round wid de clue! Us got chance now to show de bloodhound in you, and whar is you? Nosin' round lookin' for a loose lid, instead of de crook!"

"*Whfff!*" sneezed Coney Island reproachfully. Crooks were none of his business, he indicated, until he had something belonging to one to identify the scent with.

"Us got to git gwine," Mr. Breck reassembled himself, "or Columbus be bellerin' around some mo' 'bout us slippin', nawth of de neck. Maybe old brains works better is us perambulatin'."

But perambulation proved a game at which two could play: Bugwine Breck and Destiny, for example; with a head-on collision between the pair occurring at the entrance to Kaufman's Alley—without Bugwine being aware of it at the time.

For at first sight it seemed merely a phrenologist's sign—one newly hung in that thoroughfare, showing a human head in profile, the skull sub-divided by mysterious lines until it resembled a real-estate developer's dream. Underneath this was the claim: *Salambo Sees, Knows, and Tells All.*

Bugwine couldn't read, but he could tell what that picture meant. Memory and inspiration simultaneously seized him by the nape of his spiritual neck at sight of it. Columbus, he recalled, had derisively recommended that he have his head read. Well, here was where Columbus got more than he bargained for! Including the laugh. For if this kind of fortune-teller could look on the outside of a boy's head and tell what was inside, why not slip him two bits more, and—

"Fo'ward, Coney!" bellowed Mr. Breck in the grip of inspiration. "Dumb, is I? Just wait—I gwine show dat Columbus who's dumb!"

Readjustment of the speckled tie, and a *rat-tat* of Bugwine's knuckles on the seer's front door followed fast—to have it open with disconcerting suddenness, revealing in the darkened interior behind it a bathrobe-clad, chocolate-colored six-footer in red cheesecloth turban and felt slippers.

"Salambo greets you for yo' readin'!" He stood invitingly aside.

"Got to do more'n dat," mumbled Mr. Breck from the neighborhood of the huge phrenologist's knees, while he achieved a fresh grip on his own feet. They had a tendency to go places when a boy was scared.

For his part, Coney Island shot between the phrenologist's ankles, and headed back through the dim-lit hallway toward a smell of cookery.

"Specializes in de impossible," countered Salambo from the shadows. Bugwine couldn't get a good look at him. "Enter and seat yo'se'f, Mist'—Mist'—"

"Bugwine Breck, de Human Bloodhound."

"—Mist' Hound. Set down while I cranks up de sperrits—"

"Let de sperrits lay!" Bugwine was suddenly paralyzed in front of a stuffed owl with electric lights for eyes. "Aint mess wid 'em. Also, leggo my collar; jest craves for you to quit chokin' me and git my head read—roust out de clue to de big burglary. Wants somep'n for Coney Island to smell, too, so he can sniff out de crook."

"'Scuse me 'bout de chokin'—jest aimin' steer you in de straight and narrer," apologized the giant Salambo, hustling Mr. Breck into a room lighted only by a lamp with a red globe. "You say somep'n been stole?"

"Yeah," wheezed Bugwine when the hold on his collar loosened. "A pardon, framed and hangin' over a boy's fireplace by a green cawd, done been stole. Craves a clue—"

"Is you want git yo' head read wid yo' hat on or off?" The seer suddenly sounded impatient.

"Whichever way gits de most clues for two-bits. Aint been here long, is you?"

"Jest come from de college. Aint even unpack my license yit, been so rushed wid desires to read de future."

"Dawggone! You got to have license to read heads, same as gittin' married?"

"Ax de white folks!" retorted Salambo bitterly. "Cain't turn round no mo' widout somebody checkin' you up! Um— Fine dawg you got back dar, Mist' Blood."

The phrenologist was accompanying his comment by keeping one hand in Mr. Breck's collar again, while exploring his rock-scarred skull with the fingers of the other.

"Ah!" he breathed. "Now I sees it! Dis here knot means a wall, above a mantelpiece—"

"Read on! You's in de right house!" interjected Mr. Breck approvingly.

"And hangin' dar by a green cawd—"

"Step on it, P'fessor! Rally dem clues!" his subject cheered him on.

"Hold on a minute; it's dimmin'," interposed the "professor."

"Rub it wid dis other two bits!" urged Mr. Breck, who had been to fortune-tellers before. "Dat brighten her up."

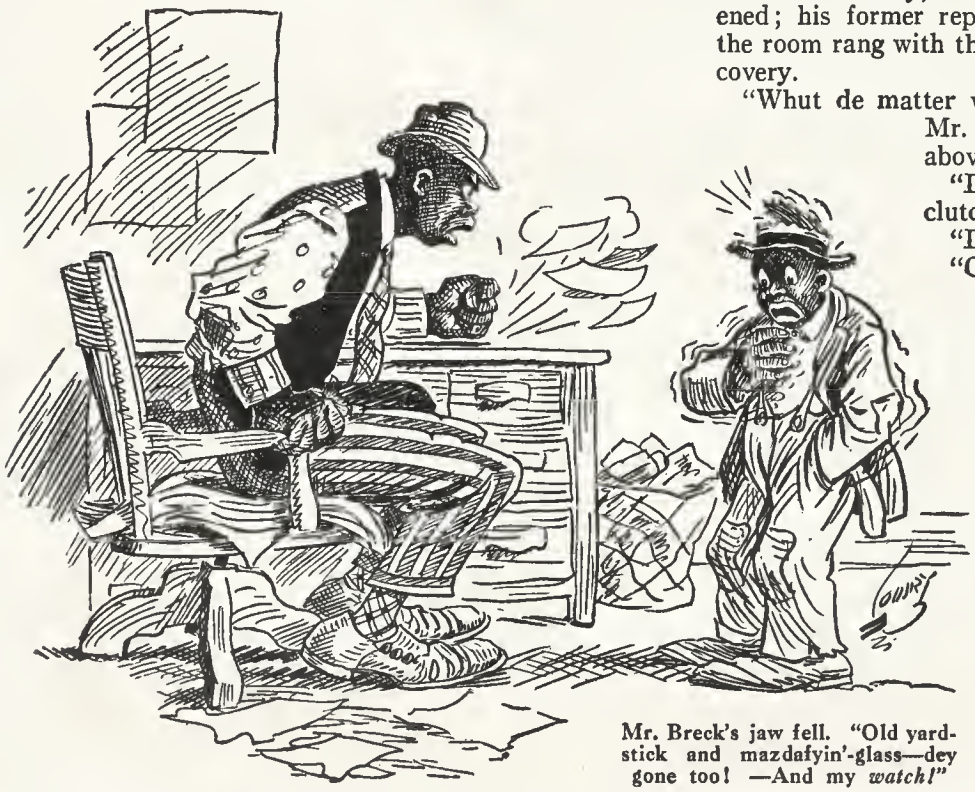
"Aint it so!" cheered the phrenologist, pocketing the second quarter. "Sees good now. Crook liftin' down de pardon. Long, skinny nigger wid a limp in one laig, and derby hat—"

"Nemmind de description!" Bugwine was beside himself. A minute more, and he would have the clue he needed to show Columbus who was slipping, and to send Geranium on that excursion.

"Dimmin' fast ag'in," warned the seer acquisitively.

"Let her dim! Gimme somep'n whut belong to dat crook, so Coney Island can sniff him out. Bloodhounds beats brains, when gits dis fur," Mr. Breck extended the boundaries of phrenology to new limits.

"Shet yo' eyes, den. It's fixin' to fade! Hold everything. *Steady-y-y-y!*" . . . .



Mr. Breck's jaw fell. "Old yardstick and mazdafyin'-glass—dey gone too! —And my *watch!*"

In the blackness of tight-shut eyes in a dimly lighted room, Bugwine heard the great Salambo leaving, then returning; the rustle of paper, and:

"Dar you is!" The seer was thrusting a small parcel into his hands. "It's de clue you craves. Keep it wropped tight twel you's ready to track, so de scent stay in."

When the inflated Bugwine reached his agency's headquarters, bursting with news, clues, and self-importance, Columbus was already there. This suited Mr. Breck: he wouldn't have to wait for his audience before he started bragging.

But Mr. Collins beat him to the first word. "Uh-huh!" he rasped. "Runnin' off hangin' round pool-rooms when I leaves you here in charge de business while I is out tryin' to stir up some—"

"Stir up mo' business, settin' right here, dan you rousts out in de whole State!" Bugwine fired a return volley. "Slippin', is I? Soon as *you* git out de way, client fotches a big case right in *to* me—"

"To *you?* Stand back while I giggles!" scoffed Mr. Collins.

"To me! Latham Hooper done detain me to cotch de crook whut stole he pardon from de Gov'nor off de wall. Old fawtune-teller gimme somep'n of de crook's for de dawg to smell. Me and Coney fixin' hit de trail; come up wid him in no time. Bloodhounds beats brains in case like dis—'specially when de brains is yourn!"

"Says you! —Whar-at de agency's b'ar-trap, too?"

Bugwine felt, then frisked himself—to fetch up short, while blankness arose in his brain and spread forward to his face.

"Aint ricollect seein' dat b'ar-trap since leaves Salambo's," he confessed.

"Whar-at dat old speckled tie you wears?"

Mr. Breck's jaw fell farther as he checked up. His tie was gone! But other discoveries crowded. "Old yardstick, and mazdafyin'-glass—dey gone too!" arose his startled yelp. "—And my *watch!*"

"Jest all busted out wid brains, aint you?" commented Columbus caustically. Before his eyes was taking place the swiftest deflation since '29.

Then suddenly, in its midst, Mr. Breck's agony deepened; his former repinings seemed mere whisperings as the room rang with the reverberations from his latest discovery.

"Whut de matter wid you? You caught in a trap?" Mr. Collins strove to make himself heard above the despairing din.

"De *dawg!*" squalled Bugwine, in the clutch of fresh disaster.

"De dawg?"

"Coney Island: *he's done gone, too!*"

Even Columbus staggered at the depths to which dumbness could descend when Bugwine really turned his mind to it. "You means," he yelled above the caterwaulings of the bereft Mr. Breck, "dat you is so dumb you sets fo'th, all full of pep and vinegar, to cotch crooks wid dat cheese-hound—and instead of de dawg gittin' de crooks, de crooks gits de dawg?"

"*Somebody* did. Befo' I even gits myse'f started good!" yowled the five-foot failure despairingly. "Sees now, eve'y time old Salambo choke me he wuz pickin' my pockets some mo'. But dawg wuzn't in my pocket. And—" Bugwine felt

arther, "I's still got de clue. Jest lacks de dawg ow—"

"Uh-huh. Still got yo' head, too; all you lacks is brains in it, and you'd be intell'gent. Boy, step in yo' own face dis way one mo' time, and as a detective you is through! Also as a husband, 'cordin' to whut I hears 'bout dat 'scursion. Now yell *at* off."

Arctic temperatures clutched at the anguished heart of Mr. Breck, while one feature began to stick out like a Congressman at a country corner-stone laying: his technique required a bloodhound. Otherwise, his dearly bought clue was a total loss.

"Thinks you is a whale," summarized his tall chief acidly, "twel dey opens de can—and finds you aint nothin' but a sardine!"

"Gwine back to dat fawtune-tellin' boy and git back eve'ything I had when I goes dar," announced Mr. Breck bravely, when announcements again were possible.

"Is you want git yo' head read wid yo' hat on or off?" The seer sounded impatient.

It was a scheme, however, that developed snags—such as failure to allow for the depreciation in a boy's welcome after he had spent his last two bits. The turbaned and bathrobed Salambo again peered forth at his knock, it was true. But a changed seer: one who kept his face in the darkness and his door three-quarters closed while he displayed an interest too faint for measurement in Bugwine and his sorrows.

"Aint seen your dawg. Also, aint 'sponsible for hats, umbrellas, and livestock," the eminent, if unlicensed, phrenologist stated his position, just prior to slamming the door in his pint-sized caller's face.

Despondently Mr. Breck turned back toward headquarters, the seat of his over-sized trousers practically dragging the ground in sympathy with his mental condition.

Poking a fearful head around the jamb of the agency doorway merely brought on more bad news. Latham Hooper was seated belligerently within. Mr. Hooper had been fed raw meat lately, judging from his looks.

"Smells 'em out while Columbus still sniffin' about," Bugwine hurriedly mutilated the agency's slogan in his own interest.

"Better git you some speed on dat smeller of yourn, den!" threatened this new Latham. "Jest hears de white-folks parole gent'man is headin' dis way. Is he aint find dat pardon, dey takes me back to 'tend pussonal to dem other two years in de jail-house! Makin' about two mo' days yo' limit befo' you gits de gate and I gits a detective!"

Bugwine watched things closing in on him. When he had a dog, he had no clue; and in gaining the clue he had lost his dog, with loss of his job and of Geranium looming next, if something didn't happen quickly.

But just here—with life at its darkest—inspiration struck again, via the sight of one "Ducktooth" Carnes, studiously spelling out the comic pages of an ancient newspaper. Memories stirred. The head-on impact of two ensuing ideas struck a spark in the sterile corridors of the Bugwinian brain, and an explosion followed there that sent Mr. Breck scurrying dizzily in search of pencil, paper—and a ghost-writer. If anything could save the [illegible] could!

Cautiously, as befitted one whose business, while improved, still hung in the balance, Bugwine thrust his head around the edge of the detective agency doorway the next morning. Nothing happening to it, he ventured to expose a larger personal area. *That* drew fire.

"Been bellerin' round some mo' about whut a big detective you is, is you?" Columbus noticed him sharply.

"Bellers nothin'. 'Spectin' impawtant developments widin—"

"Bologny! You wouldn't know a development, is it come up and kiss you!"

Something in Columbus' coat pocket caught his harassed assistant's eye.

"Whut you got dar, Columbus?" Bugwine pointed at it.

"Mawnin' paper. White folks guv it to me for he'pin' load baggage in dey car."

"Hot dawg! Luck fixin' to rally! Lemme see it."

"Huccome see it? You cain't read."

"Naw, but dey's somep'n in it whut I writ—"

"Whut *you* writ?"

"Me and de white folks, den," Mr. Breck dragged his ghost-writer reluctantly into a share of the spotlight. "But it wuz my idea—"

"Is *you* think it, it's hawss-feathers," decided Mr. Collins conclusively.

"Look in dem little ads on de *'Dawg Wanted'* page, and see," challenged Bugwine in the grip of the glow that comes from seeing one's brain-child in print.

Grumblingly Columbus saw, and read disdainfully:

WANTED—*One Bloodhound. At Depression Prices. Apply Bugwine Breck, Detective, 98 Hogan's Alley.*

"Longer you lives, dumber you gits," was Mr. Collins' verdict. "Adv'tisin' for a bloodhound! Whut you needs adv'tise for now is a *job*—on account when Latham cans you I is gwine to can you, too. Jest two mo' days, and as a sleuth you aint slippin' no more—you is *done slipped!*"

Another twenty-four hours—half of his allotted limit—passed barrenly, bringing Bugwine nothing but a shaken faith in advertising, plus the flattened feeling that came from sleeping under a strange house. A boy with no more

cash and prospects than he had wasn't going home where an excursion-craving woman like Geranium could lay hand and tongue on him!

Even the weather began to grow gloomier. Lowering clouds hung threateningly—symbolic, they seemed.

Warily Mr. Breck dragged himself forth to what was clearly to be his final appearance as a sleuth in Hogan's Alley. But midway up it, he halted, startled at what met his eye. Ahead of him, and striding straight toward the Collins Detective Agency was a burly and dusky stranger. But what took the eye and interest was that which trotted at his heels on a leash—a black-and-white spotted dog.

"Ugh-oh! Old ad gittin' answered! Feets, do yo' stuff!" Mr. Breck addressed himself; and simultaneously he and the stranger reached the agency door.

"You de Bugwine Breck," questioned the cur's custodian, "whut adv'tised for a bloodhound?"

Mr. Breck looked at the towed canine. "Whut ail dat dawg, is I is?" he answered one question with another.

"Thoroughbred. Weather like dis mess a fine dawg up in de mind; make him look dumb when he aint."

Bugwine glanced aloft. "Whut cloudy weather got do wid dawg?" he voiced a continuing perplexity.

"Plenty. Dese here spotted Siberian coach-dawg bloodhounds is fussy. Whut make him act dis way, he skeered it gwine rain, and he know he cain't track nothin' den. Dis dawg smart—aims to keep dry so he can keep busy."

Mr. Breck fumbled uncertainly with the wrapped parcel in his pocket that the phrenologist had sold him for fifty cents. He had the clue; if he only had a good bloodhound now— And everybody knew a dog couldn't trail crooks in the wet.

"Size and shape is jest right for a bloodhound, dat's fact," Bugwine ended further appraisal. "Sho is look dumb though—all time ridin' he tail like it wuz a stick-hawss."

"Bloodhound," pointed out the salesman-in-charge, "aint need no sense—jest needs a nose. Dis one so good even de innercent cain't escape him. And he takin' shine to you already—look how he makin' up to you."

Bugwine saw, and weakened. "How much you ax for him?" he questioned.

"W-e-l-l, dese Siberian spotted bloodhounds comes high," hesitated the tall stranger. "Keep 'em dry, and aint no better dawg. But makes dis one to you for two bucks, jest to git started."

Two dollars! It had a familiar—and futile—ring. If he had that much, recalled Mr. Breck, sickened and sinkingly, he wouldn't need a dog. Yet without one— He drew back from abysses, personal and professional.

"Stand hitched wid him while I gits up de two bucks!" he capitulated.

THREE minutes later the lower half of the doorway to a barbecue-stand was darkened by five feet of anxiety-on-the-hoof. Columbus Collins, dining within, paused only to push a repressive palm into the face that yearned up at him.

"As a detective," he snapped, "you is through wid calendars, and jest waitin' around for de clock to strike. Befo' and after which I aint even know you."

"Lend me two bucks, Columbus, and rallies eve'ything!" came muffled pleadings from behind the palm. "Somep'n fixin' to come off—"

"Sho is, is I lend *you* no two dollars," Columbus wasn't even slackening in his spoon-work.

"Git up two bucks, and I takes de clue and gits de jam out my business," begged Bugwine tearfully. "Got eve'ything all fixed to make five bucks—pay you back three for two, and 'tend to Geranium's 'scursion wid de rest—jest as quick as buys me de new black-spotted Siberian bloodhound whut de ad done smoke out. Bloodhound beats brains: 'bleeged to git de crook, is I git de dawg!"

"Done loaned you before," Columbus regarded the eyes of his aide, glistening like a cat's in front of a fish store. "How I know I gwine git it back?"

"Hocks de dawg as s'curity. Nothin' go wrong, you sti fo'closes on de hound."

"Gum *dis* up, and you is sunk so deep dey has to sen' down divers wid yo' meals," warned Columbus as he parted with the two. "All you gits is 'stension on yo' time."

BACK in Hogan's Alley, new speed records in dog-buying were set up.

"Step on yo'se'f, bloodhound: you's maw'gaged to de gills!" Mr. Breck jerked at the leash that attached a four-footed life-saver to him. "Show me whut I says, 'bloodhounds beats brains,' or us is both gwine quit eatin'. Git on de trail befo' de rain starts. Gallops to de barbecue-stand, and you sniffs de clue dar wid eve'ybody lookin'. Gangway for de pardon-producers!"

But Bugwine's admonition about the rain had come too late. Scarcely halfway to their destination, the deluge came. With water cascading from his straw hat and squishing from his shoes, Mr. Breck plodded hastily through the downpour, his new "bloodhound" at his heels.

At the barbecue-stand, Columbus still dined.

"Bloodhound fixin' git on de track," Mr. Breck introduced the collateral to the holder of the first-mortgage.

"After sniffin' whut?" Mr. Collins ignored dogs and undue optimism.

Bugwine dug in his pocket. Here was where table-turning upon the domineering Columbus started: vindication and victory for the oppressed Bugwine!

"*Dis!*" he flung his dearly bought package upon the table before Columbus, and began its unwrapping. "Clue whut I pays old Salambo four bits for. Brains saves bunions! Slippin', is I? Bloodhounds beats brains—and I's fixin' to use both!"

But just here something startling befell Mr. Breck, as the wrapping parted. Into his eyes had come the look of something happening to one to whom too much has happened already. His efforts at speech were producing only gurgles like a bathtub emptying.

But Columbus could speak—and see. "You! *Y-you!*" he howled in amazed wrath. "When dumber boys is bawn, it'll still be yo' buthday! Spendin' two bucks of my money to buy a five-dollar clue wid—and de clue aint nothin' but *yo' own speckled necktie!*"

Realization swept and wrecked Mr. Breck. So *that* was what was happening while Salambo was collaring and choking a boy! As fast as he fixed his business in one place, it broke down in another. When he had a clue he had no dog; the minute he got a dog the clue went haywire—and all the time Latham and Columbus using his misfortunes against him to prove that he was slipping; Geranium hollering for an excursion—

But, even in his anguish, Bugwine paused before what was happening to Columbus now. Columbus had arisen, as one who sees a ghost. He was staring with bulging eyeballs at something that seemed to frenzy him the while it fascinated. Until—

"L-l-look!" burst devastatingly from his lips. "Dat spotted pooch *aint spotted no mo'!* He's white!"

Bugwine felt his personal foundations rock. Columbus was bending over the collateral, only to rise with a new roar: "Dem spots aint stand up beca'ze dey wa'n't nothin' but blackin'! Dat aint no Siberian bloodhound! All you is done is buy back yo' own dawg—wid *my* money! Dat's *Coney Island!*"

Striding ahead of him was a burly stranger—and on a leash, at his heels, a spotted dog. "Old ad gittin' answered!" Mr. Breck addressed himself.

Avalanches roared over the dizzied and discredited mind of Bugwine Breck; details dovetailed within its muddled mazes. The concern of the seller lest the dog get wet—darkness too deep for recognition—designedly so, he now saw—at the house of the seer; tallness of the phrenologist, tallness of the dog-seller. . . . Salambo had added insult to injury, had stabbed again Bugwine in the back! True, Bugwine had Coney Island back again, but at a ruinous loss in cash and personal prestige.

And, worst of all, Columbus was right. As sleuth, as husband, and as excursionist, Bugwine Breck, for all his boastings, had finally and forever slipped. And the great pardon mystery was no nearer solution than before.

With eyes dazed and glazed with suffering, Mr. Breck's glance wandered over the walls; they took in the sorry spectacle of the drenched Coney Island—

With a jerk, the limp form of Bugwine straightened. His eyes protruded, shone. His mouth fell open, then snapped shut like the lost bear-trap going into action.

"Gangway!" clarioned this startling new Bugwine, as he reached for the leash that had come about the neck of his latest purchase. "Bloodhounds beats brains, but de brain aint no slouch now!"

And Mr. Breck was gone at a gallop, before an amazed Columbus could levy on the leash of the four-footed collateral as detective and dog shot past him. . . .

It was two hours later, with Bugwine still absent in deepening mystery, that a disgruntled client again entered the Columbus Collins Detective Agency.

"Whar at dat big-foot, big-talkin' boy?" he demanded ominously of its head.

"Bugwine? He's out exercisin' a dawg whut he bought from hisse'f wid my money," Mr. Collins gave intimations and indications that the return of Mr. Breck would afford a disturbance of the peace which would be well worth watching.

"Choke him plumb daid for me, too," directed Mr. Hooper darkly.

"I is. And—"

But just here the conference was interrupted. Voices, canine and human, disturbed the welkin without. Rejoicings seemed unmistakably in the air; the murmur of an admiring gallery neared.

Columbus rose inquiringly. Latham Hooper rose too—bringing him face-to-face with an entering Bugwine, with Coney at his ankles, and bearing—the lost pardon!

"Takes me de five bucks in ones, so can pay off Columbus, here, befo' he busts a lung loose hollerin' for his two dollars back!" a strutting little sleuth at length broke through the first flabbergasted questionings of a suddenly grateful client. "Geranium git de rest."

Mr. Breck paused to offer himself—and accepted—a cigar from Columbus' vest, while Latham was counting out the currency.

"Dawg starts it—I finishes it," he let in the first ray of light. "Bloodhound's all right, but somebody"—with a withering glance at the frozen-faced Columbus—"got to have brains, too. Dat whar-at *I* comes in so strong jest now—findin' out who stole de pardon—"

"*You* finds out?" Mr. Collins showed disagreeable signs of reviving. "Why, you aint even had no clue!"

"—Not twel I sees somep'n about Coney Island whu gimme one, you means. Den it's easy. Bugwine Breck, de Human Bloodhound, always gits his man! And me and de Sheriff jest is finish' givin' de crook a whole mess of bars to look through—"

"W-who *wuz* de crook?" Impatience broke down pride in the surrendering Columbus.

"He thunk Latham's pardon wuz one dem city licenses he needed, when he swipe it," Bugwine ignored crestfallen superiors. "But whut finally sink him wuz me noticin' de leash—"

"De *leash?*"

"Yeah! It bein' *de same green cawd* de pardon wuz hangin' up by when Salambo sneaked in Latham's house and stole it!"

Warriors All

A stirring novelette of life in the glamorous splendid dawn of civilization—by a writer whose eight years as a professional hunter of dangerous animals gives him a special knowledge of the perils of primitive man.

By JAY LUCAS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

JON the hunter tossed back his shoulder-long yellow hair and gazed broodingly at the distant mountains. There, it was said, lived a great tribe of Red Devils whose very glance meant instant death. His grandfather Urg, whom he could just remember, had told him that those red devils were dwarfs who made their homes in gnarled oaks. On the other hand Sesu, the wise man, held that they were huge giants with two heads, both crowned with living flames. Which was right? Certain it was that none of the tribe of the Hulphr had seen one of those devils since the time of one's grandfather's grandfather.

The home-caves of the Hulphr were far off, near the coast, and never before in the memory of the oldest man had the summer hunt taken the people so far inland. Indeed, some of the younger men had laughed and said that there were no great mountains and no Red Devils. But now the voices of those doubters were hushed, and they brought presents to the wise man, that misfortune might not visit them for having doubted. One, indeed,—Urth, the greatest of the scoffers,—had been killed by a long-clawed bear just the day before; and everyone knew it was a judgment come upon him for his disbelief.

But Jon, mightiest hunter of the tribe and son of the chief, had not doubted. He knew that the old ones were wiser than he, even if their stories did sometimes differ. And now the proof of those old tales lay before his very eyes. It was true that huge mountains, snow-capped even in summer, existed far back here in the forest. If the mountains were there, so were the Red Devils—the old men had not lied.

Jon's eyes traveled downward from the hilltop where he stood, and swept the camp of the Hulphr in the little valley below. Yes, there was the smoke of his own fire, coming from his own hut of bark and boughs. And in it was his wife Farsa, most beautiful of the people. Jon's great muscled chest swelled. A bark hut and a wife—a cave of his own when the people returned to their home country for the winter! His cave should have the neatest wall of any in the village, and his little garden should be the freest from weeds. He was now a man, with a hut and a wife!

Long had his father, Zala the chief, withheld his consent to the marriage, giving it reluctantly only after Norna, Jon's sister, had been stolen by the Dark-haired Men. Norna had always been bitterly opposed to the marriage, and her father had listened to her, since Jon would not.

And so it was that Jon had taken a wife, and thus was no longer a boy in the eyes of the people. A boy! He who stood over six feet, muscled like a young lion! A boy! And across his broad chest hung the well-tanned skin of a great tiger—rarest and most deadly of forest animals, but killed by Jon unaided, with his stone ax! A boy! He who had thrown the greatest of his tribe's wrestlers—thrown them with ease—at the autumn feast the year before!

But now that was over, and he stood a man among men. Already he had seen to it that his broad chest was covered with the tattoo-marks of full maturity—the circle and swastika of a Hulphr, and the crossed spears of a chief's son. There were also blue bands around his supple right biceps, and the left would come soon. Jon, a man!

Despite his weight, his moccasined feet were silent as he swung down the hillside and entered the forest. The scent of the pine was strong in his nostrils—a scent he loved, even as man loves woman. He saw the track of beaver and marten, of fox and deer; and without glancing a second time knew absently just when each track had been made, for this carpet of pine-needles was his book from which he read. Once he paused a moment beside a great depression in the ground—the track of a huge mammoth, but more than two moons old—made before the last heavy rain.

Absently, thinking of his new manhood, thinking of the Red Devils of the mountains, he entered a circular opening in the forest with a few pines almost in the middle. Striding swiftly but lightly, he was passing those middle pines without a glance, for it was too near camp to look for game.

And then—a rumbling, earth-shaking bellow. The swift thud of great, running hoofs bearing down on him. Like a flash, Jon whirled and threw himself sidewise—just in time. The earth shaking, the huge beast plunged blindly by. An aurochs, a great black bull with a lighter stripe down his back—a back that, tall as Jon was, was higher than the top of his head.

Now the great beast was whirling clumsily. Jon saw his little red infuriated eyes, saw the long, curving, needle-sharp horns. Here was the terrible bull who challenged and killed even the great bear and the lion himself.

Again the aurochs bore down, with force to uproot a fair-sized pine. The ground shook to his bellow and his flying hoofs. Jon glanced once toward the pines, in whose branches there would be safety. Too far. . . .

Jon set his feet and waited. On came the aurochs. Twenty paces—fifteen—ten! The huge head was lowered, the neck-muscles set for the toss that would end this man. Five paces!

The spear of Jon launched forth, straight and true, driven by all the power of his great back-muscles. Straight between those great horns it went, and the flint head sank deeply into the hump between the shoulders. And still the beast came on, pain mingling with rage in his furious bellowing.

Jon dropped to earth like a flash, and not an inch above him swept a mighty horn. Lucky that the pain of the spear had dulled the aurochs' judgment! Now Jon was

on his feet again, stone ax in his hand; and again the great black bull was whirling for a new charge.

The first startled fear had left Jon—of what use was fear when there was no escape? Now his eyes blazed with the lust of battle. He raised his ax:

"Charge, O black one! Charge, and we shall see which of us shall lie dead on this grass!" came his challenge.

The unbarbed spear had been shaken from the wound and lay twenty paces off. Blood was gushing from the aurochs' wound as he came. Again, twenty paces—fifteen—ten.

And then Jon's arm flashed in an arc. Blade first, the flint ax whistled through the air toward the approaching monster. Straight between the eyes it caught him. A thud, a grunt—and the aurochs lay motionless.

But well Jon knew that that mighty skull was far too thick for his ax to penetrate—the beast was but temporarily stunned, and Jon was now unarmed. With unbelievable speed, Jon ran past the fallen aurochs and toward his spear. He snatched it up, a glance showing him it was undamaged.

Now the aurochs was staggering to his feet. Now Jon was running toward the nearest pine, and behind him came the immense black bull, gaining speed as it shook off its daze. Jon's keen ears judged from the pounding hoofs his distance in the lead. No, he could not climb the pine in time. It had to be battle to the death.

The aurochs charged blindly, after the manner of his kind. And Jon, after the manner of *his* kind, was thinking as he ran—thinking fast as man can think only in such emergencies. At last he had it—a plan!

Jon wheeled and threw his back against the middle of the pine, facing the monster bearing close on him. The butt of the spear rested against the shaggy trunk; the point was directed toward the aurochs' huge chest; the middle was held lightly in Jon's fingers. He pressed his body close to the spear-shaft, that the beast might charge true upon it, in charging the man.

Quickly as a flash of lightning almost, it was over. The chest of the aurochs touched the flint point. As it did so, Jon released his hold and dived sidewise. Not quite in time, for a sweeping horn knocked him off his feet.

As he fell backwards, Jon heard the crash of the aurochs striking the tree-trunk—saw the topmost boughs sway from the heavy impact. As he scrambled quickly to his feet, he saw the mighty gush of blood from the aurochs' chest, saw a bare inch of the broken spear-shaft protruding from the beast's body.

Another glance showed him scarcely a span of broken shaft lying at the foot of the tree—almost its full length was buried in the monster!

Still, tenacious to life, the aurochs kept its feet. Its eyes were glazing, and it lurched and staggered in blind circles, its bellows shaking the forest. Jon ran swiftly to recover his ax, but even as he ran, he heard a heavy thud behind him, a last gurgling, savage bellow.

And as he picked up his ax, realization swept over Jon. He, Jon, had slain an aurochs in single combat—fighting him fairly on the ground and not casting his spear from a tree as was the custom! Already he was called the greatest hunter of his people. What would he be called when this was known? Running forward, he placed his foot on the neck of the fallen monster, held his flint ax aloft, and sent a wild yell of triumph ringing through the forest. Jon, slayer of aurochs! And then, head erect and step light, he turned toward the camp of his people. Others could come and skin this beast, dress the meat, for it was near camp.

Presently he came to the camp. As he passed between the huts of bark, many voices called to him cheerily, for the Hulphr were a happy, contented folk who preferred friendship and quiet to enmity and strife; and Jon, was well liked by all. A huge young man teased him good-naturedly:

"Ho, Jon, what have you slain today? A few mammoths, perhaps? Or did you seize a rhinoceros by the horn and twist its head off?"

Jon smiled good-naturedly; he felt that he could afford to smile:

"I have slain enough, Boram; tomorrow I will tell you what, and send a skinning-party."

Chuckling softly, Jon continued on toward his own hut. A knotted, monkeylike little cripple stopped him.

"Ho, Jon, son of the chief! I have a present for you—a present that will fit none but you."

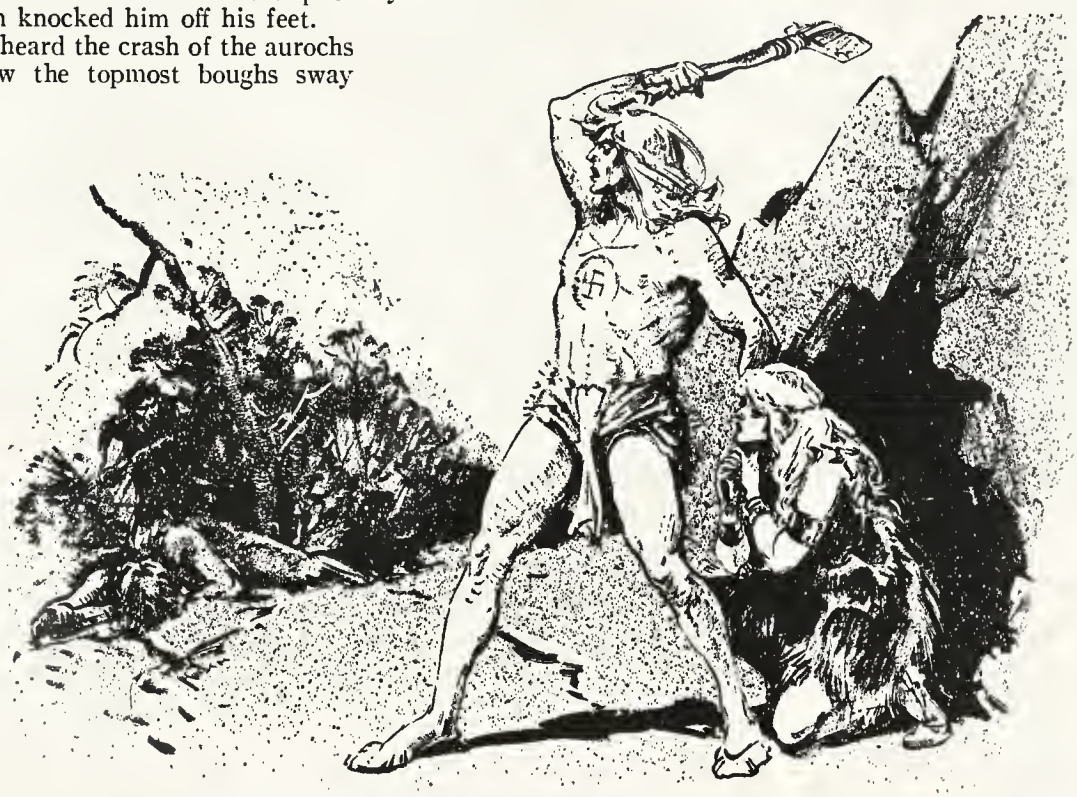
"Moccasins, is it, Gardu?"

"Moccasins! Moccasins, says he! Am I a woman, to make moccasins?"

"But what else is there that will not fit any man? My tiger-skin—would it not hang well on your own shoulders, Gardu, even if they be not so broad as mine?"

"By the holy sycamore, it would fit well in size but ill in looks! Who am I to wear a tiger-skin on my body?"

"You wore it once," answered Jon kindly. "Was it not in the hunt of the mammoth that your bones were broken and bent? Gardu, you have earned the right to be called a man as long as you live, and we who are younger respect you for it."



Then his head went back, and the chant

"You, but not all young men, Jon,—there are hunters in the tribe who have not the brains of a foolish porcupine! Aho! But to get back to our present. Behold, Jon, what hand but yours will this fit?"

From behind his back the cripple whipped a wonderfully wrought stone ax, polished till it glistened like the sea in summer, keen as the tooth of a fox, and hafted with ash into which hot oil had been rubbed until the wood gleamed like the stone itself. It was perfect, complete, even to the loop of soft-tanned aurochs-skin to hang from the wrist. The young hunter's eyes gleamed eagerly, and his lips parted. After all, it was not so long since he had put boyhood behind, and his heart could still leap as leaps only the heart of youth.

"Aho! So it pleases your eye! See, Jon, if it pleases your hand—it was fashioned for that hand."

The young hunter slipped the loop over his wrist, backed off a step, and sent the keen blade whistling and swishing through the air until it looked like a streak of dull fire.

"It is perfect! I never thought there could be such an ax. The Red Devils could not have fashioned more skillfully."

"Gardu! It is perfect! I never thought there could be such an ax! The hands of the Red Devils of the mountains themselves could not have fashioned more skillfully!"

"Red Devils! Aho! It is known that even old Gardu of the twisted bones was a great hunter once. Why should he not remember the feel of good flint blade? And why should he not fashion it now that he is good for nothing else? It pleases you. I am satisfied!"

The old man beamed on the younger.

"It is well, Gardu. I shall bring you meat killed with —a whole red stag, if you say so."

"Stag, said he! Aho! A squirrel would fill old Gardu, the twisted, with more comfort! But you owe me nothing Jon—what man of us does not owe you, as I do? A fat belly would not often have gone hungry but for the prowess of Jon the hunter? But here am I, the old ted man, keeping Jon from his hut and his wife! I am an old fool!"

He turned and hobbled off, and Jon entered his own hut. His wife Farsa sprang to her feet, for it was the man entered—a polite custom which she, like most married women of her tribe, would soon forget, at least as far as her husband was concerned.

"Ho, Jon! You are late; the pot grows cold," she pouted prettily as she poured savory stew of roots and meat into a platter which she set before him.

"It is good stew, Farsa; you cook well!" He smiled up at her as he took a piece of meat in his fingers.

"So I cook well, do I, Jon? Is that all a man thinks of, his stomach? For a week you have not called me beautiful, or told how yellow my hair is." Her lip trembled.

"Have I not? But what *have* I done in that week?" Answering himself, he reached back and threw aside a tanned deerskin, revealing a little bundle beneath.

"Skins of the marten, Farsa, that I have trapped for you. Think of how they will look on your shoulders when the time of the snow comes again. Or would you rather that I sat around in our fire-smoke telling you how pretty you are, and that the martens wore these? And is there not much meat in our hut?"

"Forgive me, Jon! It—it is that I saw you smile at Trenda—the vixen! You—you do not think her prettier than I, do you?"

"Smiled at—" He stared at her in amazement, and then threw back his head to send a full, deep-chested laugh ringing out. "Think Trenda prettier than you! By the holy sycamore, ask me if I think a mouse bigger than a mammoth! Ho—ho! Give me some more of the stew, Farsa —just a little."

He finished eating, and she brought him a bowl of water in which he washed his hands, taking clean sand to scrub them from a smaller bowl. As he squatted drying them over the fire, a voice called from outside:

"Amaru, your cousin, stands here."

"Come in, Amaru—come in! Farsa, give him some stew. What, eaten already? Well, have some anyway, and see what a good cook my wife is. But so was yours, Amaru, before the Black-haired People carried her off."

Farsa shivered.

"Oh, Jon, I am afraid of the Black-haired Folk from the south! What if they should carry *me* off!"

Jon patted her shoulder comfortingly, and sat staring silently at the ground a long time. At last he spoke:

"The Black-haired Folk! Ahu! A load has seemed to rest on my heart these many moons, since the Dark Men came near our caves and stole my fair sister Norna. Never again shall I see little Norna, who played on the sands with me when we were children. Where else is girl as fair? All I ask is that the gods grant she be dead by now—that would be mercy to my little sister, whom I loved!"

"Did you love her more than you do me, Jon?"

"Hush, woman! Cousin, things have gone too far with the Dark Men—they have carried off too many of our fair-haired girls! We must meet them in battle."

Amaru shrugged his shoulders—fine, supple shoulders, but not so broad as Jon's.

"It is easy to talk of giving them battle! Their numbers are almost twice ours."

"They are not so tall as we."

"But thicker, of sturdier build."

"But Amaru, we must do *something!* Why, cousin, we men of the North cannot let the Dark-haired Men drive us from our own hunting-grounds!"

"Oh, Jon!" Farsa's voice was a wail. "Why have they come from the South? They hate our dark forests, that are the breath of life in our nostrils!"

"But," growled Jon shortly, "they like the game that fills them. It is we or they. There must be a great battle, and at its end there shall be no more Dark Men in the North, or"—his voice sank and his head bowed—"no more of us on earth."

Amaru spoke, his voice low, troubled:

"Their numbers are far greater than ours; who can win a battle against far greater numbers? But Jon, there is a way—for the man who is brave enough. That is why I now sit in your hut—you are the bravest of the people."

"Red Devils? If it pleases you, I am satisfied."

"A way!" Jon's eyes flamed. "Then tell it to me, cousin, and I will do what you say—even if it be that I must charge single-handed into their spears and die thus!"

"It is not that. It is— No, Jon, you would be afraid. I shall not tell you."

"Afraid! I, Jon?" He sprang to his feet, eyes blazing, and brandished his new ax. "Afraid! Say what should be done, Amaru, and I shall do it, and count my life as nothing! I swear it by the Sky-god who crashes in flames above our pines, who sends the rain to make trees grow, whose great name may not be mentioned except in the holy chant! Yes, by the Sky-god himself I swear it—and an oath to the Sky-god may not be broken on pain of death!"

"It is sworn by the Sky-god. Jon, you must travel to the snow mountains that lie beyond us, and call loudly upon the Red Devils themselves to help us—naught else can save us from extinction."

"The—the Red Devils!" Jon's voice sank to an awed whisper.

"Yes, cousin. By the holy sycamore, I wish with all my heart that you had not sworn the Sky-god's oath, for now you must go, whether you want to or not; otherwise the wrath of the Sky-god would fall on you—far worse is that than the anger of all the devils!"

Jon raised his bowed head, and spoke:

"Cousin, I knew not of what you spoke. But the Sky-god oath is sworn—the oath that no man may call back. With the dawn, I start toward the snowy mountains. If I die, be it for my forests and my tribe!"

"Jon, cousin,"—Amaru placed an arm on his shoulder affectionately,—"it is not so bad as that. In a dream it all came to me: I saw you go, ax in hand, into the country of the Red Devils. You took them presents of marten-skins, which made them your friends. And I saw you come back leading a host of the Red Devils themselves, that they might fight beside us against the Dark Men. I saw the battle, and its end: Dark Men strewed the field, damp with their own blood. And you, Jon, were unharmed, and great was your name as a hero—Jon, who had saved us of the yellow hair."

"You saw that?"

"All that, Jon. And then a man of our own kind came to me with shining face and said: 'Go you, Amaru, to your cousin Jon, and tell him of the great things you have seen. Tell him that if he go to the country of the Red Devils, all shall come to pass as I have showed it to you, and the name of Jon the hero shall go down until generations are as the sands that strew the seashore, and as the pines in the forest. But tell him,' said he, 'that if he go not, his limbs shall wither and twist under him, and the Sky-god shall send a shaft of fire from the heavens that shall blast him like a burned coal in the camp-fire, and forever after shall the name *Jon* mean *coward.*' He stood a moment, Jon, and then he spoke again, saying: 'For behold me; I am the Sky-god himself!' And then there was a terrific crash deafening my ears, and he had vanished. Naught was before me but a tiny puff of shiny white smoke, slowly drifting up through the boughs of my hut—and there was no fire."

"He—he said all that! The Sky-god himself!" Jon could hardly speak, for the awe that filled him. "Then, cousin, a mastodon could not hold me back. Have I not always served the gods well?"

A little whimper came from beside him:

"O, Jon, my brave hunter, there will be danger!"

Jon turned upon her sternly:

"Peace, woman! Would you bring the anger of the Sky-god himself upon us, by asking me to disobey him?"

"Oh, Jon! Ahu! I only said that there would be danger—and my Jon is brave! I did not say that you should not go. See, Jon, already I prepare the dried meat and pounded berries for your journey!" She pulled an earthen pot toward her. Her face was white and set.

"It is well, Farsa. The Sky-god will bring me safely back to you."

Amaru spoke again: "There was one more thing the Sky-god said—woe would come on me had I forgotten! No man must know where you go or what your mission is; it must be thought that you go to seek larger herds of elk."

"But, Amaru, I must tell my father! The devils are

Jon released his hold and dived sidewise; a sweeping horn knocked him off his feet.

eating his stomach—he is old, and at any moment he may die. Besides, is he not the chief of the Hulphr?"

Amaru shook his head slowly. "The ways of the Sky-god are beyond me; I can but tell you his words."

"Then," said Jon regretfully, "it shall be as he said. When I am missed in the morning, make it known that I have gone hunting and may be gone a moon or more. May the great Sky-god grant that I return at all!"

"It is well, Jon. And now I return to my hut. May your night be peaceful." Amaru stooped and passed under the low door.

Jon turned to his wife: "Farsa, put water on the coals, that I may wash my hair—it is well that I should look my best when I stand before the Red Devils; it will show them respect. Where is my pouch? Get my tweezers and pluck my beard while the water heats."

He lay back, his head in her lap, while with the little ɔol of mammoth-ivory she plucked hair by hair, quickly and dexterously, from a beard already weak and discouraged by years of plucking. At last she finished, and passed her hand gently over his face:

"Jon, my husband, your skin is smooth and white as a little girl's."

"Is it?" He laughed, embarrassed but pleased.

"Oh, Jon, Jon! What should I do? What should I say?" Her voice trembled uncertainly.

"Farsa,"—he reached up and took her hand gently,—"you should prepare me for my journey toward the mountains where the snow lies always—and say nothing. The Sky-god himself has promised my safe return, and why snould he trick me? Have I not always served the gods well? When have I killed even a squirrel that I have not burned part, that the smoke might carry it to the Sky-god's table above the clouds?"

"But, Jon—oh, I cannot hold my tongue! You must not go!"

"Peace, woman!" he thundered. "Would you bring the wrath of the Sky-god upon our heads? Spread the skins, that we may sleep."

She did so, her face white and drawn. But as she lay beside him, he knew that she turned and tossed restlessly. He himself pretended to sleep, that there might be no discussion of the Sky-god's wishes; and such was his splendid health, that soon he did sleep.

He awoke in the first gray of dawn. Now Farsa, exhausted, was sunk in troubled, restless slumber. He would not awake her—the parting would be too painful. On tip-toe he stole around the hut. His bright new ax he hung on the strap from his shoulder, balanced on the other side by his pouch of dried meat and berries. He picked up his best war-spear. Just a moment he paused, bending over her softly, and then his lips parted in a low, almost soundless whisper:

"Good fortune remain with you, Farsa, my dear one, till I return—if that day come. May the Sky-god himself watch over you until then!"

He stooped and touched her shining yellow hair with his finger-tips, and then he slipped from his hut into the gray of dawn. He thought no one would see him so early, but a voice called from a tiny hut he was passing:

"Ho, Jon! You travel early—with a pouch for a long journey?"

"Gardu, the twisted! Do you never sleep?"

"But little. Where do you go?"

"That is my affair, Gardu—better a short answer than a lie."

"Aho! Mysteries—from the open Jon. Did I not see Amaru, your cousin, enter your hut last night?"

"What of it?"

"Aho! Is not your father, our chief, near to death?"

"And what of that, twisted man?"

"What of it, says he! If you were gone, who would be chief of the Hulphr people when your father dies? Amaru, your cousin, is it not?"

"Ancient one, say no word against my cousin—my best friend! Would you like to feel the ax you yourself fashioned sink into your skull?"

"Why should I care? What is my twisted life? Amaru, your cousin, is older than you, and his brain is clever."

"My cousin's mind is greater than mine, and I respect him for it. He shall be my counselor when I am chief."

"Greater, says he! Ahu! His mind is more cunning, but yours is truly great; all the greater in that it is free from twists—which is more than I can say for some other mind we know of!" Gardu sniffed.

"Peace, old one! I hear naught against my cousin and friend. I cannot tell where I go, but I will say that it is a mission sworn to the Sky-god."

"Oh—and Jon cannot turn back? Well, I return to my sleep—and I wish some god would grant that I could sleep till Jon returns. My heart will be heavy in my breast. . . . May your spear be strong!"

He ducked back into his tiny hut, his sharp eyes glittering strangely; and Jon turned on his heel to hurry through the silent camp of his people, and on into the forest. It was not yet good light; the great bear and the

long-fanged tiger still prowled; but to leave unseen, one had to take a chance on meeting them.

As the sun rode high in the heavens, and again began its descent into the west, Jon swung quickly through the forest, always south, toward the snow-capped mountains. Despite his weight and bulk, he traveled lightly as a child, for his lithe muscles were things to marvel at. At noon he stopped a few moments to eat a handful of his food and drink from a spring he found. He passed elk, and herds of red deer, and once he crossed the trail of a great aurochs. His hunter's instinct tempted him to follow the huge beast, but he thought of his mission and forced himself to leave the trail. Once he saw a cave-bear in a glade ahead, and made a long circle to leeward to avoid it, for he was not on the hunting-trail.

In spite of himself, his mind was troubled. Why had gnarled, twisted old Gardu tried to raise doubts in his mind? By the holy sycamore, he should have cleft Gardu's head—or at least knocked him senseless with the side of the ax! Well, it was too late now to question things; he had sworn the Sky-god's oath. Even if Amaru had lied,—which of course he hadn't,—there was nothing for it but to travel straight on until he met the Red Devils.

The Red Devils. He shuddered. They were said to be loathsome creatures—on that all the old ones agreed. Would they kill and eat him? It was said that even to look on one meant death, so horrible were they! But some hard thinking told Jon that that could not be: if all who had looked on them had died, how could the yellow-haired people know that there were Red Devils, without all being dead? Or perhaps one could look at them from a great distance in safety—that would explain the different stories about their size, and whether they had only one head or two, both covered with flame that seared the eyes.

NIGHT was almost upon him. He was now in a country of many bluffs, the foothills of the mountains; here, doubtless, he could easily find a cave to sleep in. He hoped fervently that he would not meet the Red Devils until daylight, for though he feared to meet them at all, he feared still more to meet them in the darkness.

And thinking thus, he came suddenly face to face with a great brown bulk that blocked the trail. For a moment man and beast stood confronting each other in surprise. It was an Irish elk, so-called now—the giant moose, beside which the modern moose of Canada would appear a puny pygmy. It stood well over seven feet at the great shoulders, and its palmated antlers were massive things more than fourteen feet from tip to tip—a giant of a giant species.

Jon backed away cautiously. He knew that the great elk was a comparatively timid and retiring beast except in the rutting season, when he became an unreasoning, mad thing, charging blindly through the woods, seeking trouble wherever he might find it. The rutting season was barely beginning—so why was it not whirling to run to the swamp?

There came a gurgling grunt, and the giant elk was coming, slowly gaining speed, the immense antlers lowered threateningly. His little red eyes were savage, as he came on.

But Jon was thirty paces off; he had plenty of time to swing himself up into the branches of the nearest tree. Under him went the elk, to stop, puzzled, and stare around for the man who had vanished.

Then he spied Jon, and came trotting heavily back, to lash the trunk of the tree in vain rage with his antlers. Jon looked down on him complacently. Foolish brute! Why did he not know that he was begging to be killed in thus fuming and raging beneath a man armed with a spear? Jon shifted his position farther out on the limb, that no branches would come in his way when he hurled his flint-tipped spear downward. He would wait till the brute was directly beneath, so that the one thrust could cut the spine and so end matters quickly.

And then—there came the sharp crack of a breaking limb. Clutching wildly, Jon managed to seize another, lower down, even as he fell. Something struck his leg, numbing it—a giant antler. Quickly he drew himself upward and threw himself panting against the trunk of the tree. Only luck had saved him from plunging down to be crushed by that crazed brute of the swamps. No, not luck—was he not in the branches of a big sycamore, most sacred of trees, and had he not always served his gods?

BUT now the aspect of the matter had changed. He had saved his life, but he had lost his spear. There it lay, its flint head glistening in the sun, beneath the feet of the giant elk. The ax? That was useful only in close combat.

Jon thought of Boram, and of the joke often told with relish around the camp-fires—of how Boram had been kept two days in a tree by a rutting elk, to be rescued finally, hungry and cold, by a small hunting-party of the tribe that chanced to pass.

Two days—perhaps more! For there was plenty of forage around, and a stream close by. Jon groaned at the thought. He had food, but no water, up there in that tree—and besides, sitting up here was not taking him nearer to the country of the Red Devils, where his mission lay.

It was said by some of the old ones that all the animals of the wild understood human speech, even if they did not often utter it. Jon leaned down toward the great bulk beneath, and spoke warningly:

"O great elk, take warning and go away while you still live! I am a man, and therefore thoughts will come to me that tell me how to slay you if you remain. Besides, you have scarred the bark of the holy sycamore, which can bring you but misfortune."

To no avail were his words—he had always doubted very much if the beasts really understood. So, sitting astride a great limb, his head sank on his chest, and he did the one thing given to no other creature of the forest to do—he thought.

Suddenly his head came erect, and his eyes glowed. He had formed a plan—true, a dangerous plan, but better than sitting up there until the huge elk got ready to depart.

He slipped off his tiger-skin and held it outspread in both hands. Long he held it thus, taunting the beast until at last it paused directly beneath. And then the skin fell, straight between the wide-flung antlers—straight over the little red, hate-inflamed eyes.

With a bellow, the elk charged. His head struck the sycamore, and he lunged again and again, striving to crush the thing on his forehead which smelled of man, which therefore he thought must be man. He did not hear a soft thud behind him; and when at last the tiger-skin fell to the ground and he realized that beside him crouched that hated two-legged beast, it was too late.

The elk started to whirl. But as he did so, a sharp flint point pricked the skin behind his shoulder-blade, darted in, driven by two powerful arms, and plunged straight through his heart. Blindly, a wild bellow coming from his throat, he reared straight erect, reared to tremendous height. He tried to strike, but the man eluded him dexterously. And then the great elk was stumbling to his knees—slipping to his chest, rolling to his side. A few gasps, and he was dead.

Jon withdrew his spear, wiped it on the brown coat of

the fallen one, and nodded sagely. What could an elk expect after desecrating the bark of a sacred sycamore? At any rate, he, Jon, was well out of an awkward situation, and it was unthinkable that he should go without burning some of the meat, that the smoke might carry it as a thank-offering to the table of the Sky-god.

He glanced around. There was a bluff with a shallow cave that would offer shelter for the night. As he had to build a fire anyway, it was as well that he should camp here. The hills ahead grew higher and higher, for he was at the foothills of the mountains, and it would soon be dark. If he had to meet Red Devils, it would be much better to meet them in daylight, for their power would probably be less then than at night, when all evil things have power.

Before the cave he built a huge fire to keep the wild beasts away. He hoped it would keep the Red Devils away too, but he feared very much that a few burning logs would not daunt them; were they not partly made of living flame themselves?

HE was sure he could not sleep; his mind was too full of thoughts of the Red Devils. But it was not ten minutes until he dozed; and when he awoke, the eastern sky was already gray. His fire had long been out, and for hours he had lain at the mercy of any prowling beast! So! There was proof that the Sky-god guarded him, after all! He stirred the coals, and threw half a handful of his food on it in gratitude. Would the Sky-god eat dried meat and pounded berries? Well, he gave the best he had—the Sky-god was just and would welcome it, whether he'd eat it or not. Perhaps he'd give it to some minor god, which would leave more fresh meat for himself.

Jon ate quickly—he should have got started much earlier. A game-trail left the little clearing under the bluff and turned into the forest, going toward the south. He would follow that.

Not ten minutes had he traveled when some faint sound ahead made him leap into the low brush beside the trail. He glanced around, found the best place of concealment, and crouched there. What animal was coming toward him?

And then he heard voices—strangely guttural voices—and the soft patter of running feet. The Red Devils were coming—and he had to stand up and face them! He would let them come abreast first, so that he could see them, and then he would spring out waving the marten furs, his weapons left behind. What good could weapons be against Red Devils?

And then he saw, and his lips drew back in a snarl unbecoming to his handsome face. Not Red Devils, but three of the black-haired men from the South! How evil they looked, with their dark skins and wisps of black beard on their faces! One of them carried a bundle over his shoulder—some long bundle that hung down before and behind.

Now they were passing, in the same heavy run. And then Jon saw what the bundle was—a girl, probably unconscious, with her head muffled in a dirty fur so that she could not cry out. And he saw the fair skin—fair as his own—where her legs and arms were exposed. The soul of Jon blazed with madness and hate. The war-cry of his people rose to his lips, but by a mighty effort he choked it back. What should he do? They had already passed, and they were three to one.

And then he was running like a deer, back as they went, but circling around them. He would crouch beside the trail again, ahead of them, and take them by surprise. One—perhaps two—would drop under his ax before they would realize what was happening. At least by surprising them he would have an equal chance—and what more could any man ask and still be called a man? In the blinding racial fury that shook his big body, all thought of the Red Devils was forgotten. There were the Dark Men—more tangible and more threatening than devils of any color!

Where had they stolen the fair-haired girl? He did not know of any tribes related to his that were hunting in that part of the forest at the time. Was it some girl of his own tribe that had been stolen previously? Was it—could it be?—his cousin Amaru's wife, the last one stolen by the Dark Men? he Sky-god grant that it was!

Out of the underbrush, into the path of the Dark Men, leaped a wild white figure, long yellow hair streaming behind. Now the tiger-skin had been cast aside and the blue tattooing gleamed freshly on the great chest. A war-yell, wild and terrifying as the scream of tiger himself, echoed through the forest; the leader of the Dark Men dropped, his skull cleft to his neck by the flashing war-ax. The bundle which had been on his shoulder fell and rolled on the ground. Over it leaped Jon, his face the face of a demon. The Dark Men! The Dark Men! The sky was turning red—the forest was reeling! To kill! His war-yell rang again as he sprang to the next man.

The Dark Man had a shield of aurochs-hide, but one blow shattered it—the next his skull. One was left—a thick-set brute. Man to man—may the fight last long, that the greater glory would come in it! Battle-ax ripped dully into shield; flint clicked on flint. The Dark Man was silent, but into his face Jon flung the war-yell of the Hulphr—that terrible screaming yell that makes men's blood run cold in their veins.

Moccasined feet patted swiftly. The Dark Man's ax flashed in the sun, but Jon's was already darkened with blood. On the Dark Man's face was terrible fear, for he saw that he was no match for this great white demon whose eyes blazed like some mad beast's. Moccasins patted softly; flint clicked on flint.

But the Dark Man was not trying to strike a death-blow—perhaps he saw that to try were futile. Back and back he allowed himself to be forced. Not trying to strike, he could parry well. Perhaps Jon could have found an opening; but why hurry the thing—what joy was greater than this madness of battle? Long they fought, strike and parry.

And then, over his foe's shoulder, Jon caught a fleeting glimpse of other figures—dark figures—coming running down the trail. So that was why the other had wished to prolong the fight—he knew his fellows were following on the trail!

MADNESS in his eye, Jon stopped a feebly aimed blow with the head of his own ax; then he had seized the other's in his left hand. His flint bit home, and a shattered figure lay at his feet.

Now he could glance directly at the would-be rescuers. Six of them! Too great odds for any man! Jon whirled, swept the still figure of the girl into his great arms, and ran. Behind him came the Dark Men, silent—did they have no war-yell? He felt the figure stir faintly in his arms, and spoke as he ran:

"Fear not. The Dark Men shall not have you. As I fall, I strike your brains out with my own ax."

Of course, burdened thus, he could not outrun the hated ones. No, but he could run to the bluff where he had spent the night, and there, his back to the wall, make his last stand. If he could kill one or two more before he fell; no doubt the Sky-god would give him a seat of honor at his table, for nothing pleased the Sky-god more than the death of a Dark Man.

By a rod or two, he reached the bluff ahead of the enemy. The figure in his arms was reaching up, trying to pull the fur from her face and head. Jon had no time to assist her—time only to throw her roughly against the foot of the wall, and then whirl to meet his mortal foes.

"Charge, you, upon the ax of Jon! By the Sky-god's name, there will be a fight before I fall to you!"

One was slightly ahead of the others. Unexpectedly, Jon sprang to meet him. One blow broke his arm under its shield, the next his head. And again Jon had his back to the bluff, his ax whirling ahead of him.

"Charge, you dark ones, and see how a yellow-haired man dies! What holds you back?"

Back, indeed, they hung, but not entirely in fear. They were talking together quickly—in strange, clicking, guttural tones. And then two went far to each side, the other approaching close in front in challenge.

"Do you think me a fool," asked Jon, "that I should leave the rock and allow four to come behind me?"

Moccasined feet patted swiftly. The Dark Man's ax flashed. Flint clicked on flint.

Some more guttural clickings. And then the fourth man turned and hurried off, along the foot of the bluff. Where he went was plain to Jon—to the top of the bluff to roll a great stone down. Five to one, and the dark men would not give him fair fight!

He could not leave the bluff—whichever way he tried to go, there would be at least two at his back. But he would not die by a rock cast on his head. No, he would sing the chant of the Sky-god, dash out the fair-haired girl's brains, and then charge into his enemies. He would die a man's death, that his place at the Sky-god's table might be high!

He felt the girl crouched behind his knees. He dared not take his eyes off his enemies a moment to glance at her, but his left hand went behind him and passed soothingly over her hair—the soft, silky hair of his people, not coarse like that of the Dark Folk. Then his great chest filled, his head went back, and the chant of the Sky-god rolled out over the woods:

"Hothr, whose home is on high, a hunter of Hulphr
Sends thee his soul—safe may it sit in thy sanctuary!
Bar not my bowed head from bending to honor thee, holy one!
Hothr, who holds in his hand the homeland of Hulphr.
Sacrifice sent we in smoke to the seat of the Sky-gods;
He of the Hulphr thy holy name—"

A cry of warning rang out. Back under the bluff came running the Dark Man who had left the others. A savage war-yell rang through the forest.

Jon stopped suddenly, his mouth still open to form the last word of the chant.

And then from the forest burst a band of men—six of them. Or were they men? Tall, slender ones with thin faces crowned by living flames! The Red Devils themselves! Theirs were not the faces of men, but the faces of demons—bared teeth, glaring eyes, and that terrible crown of flame.

Jon started, even in his terror. Amaru had not lied—the Red Devils would help him! They had even now come to his assistance—their eyes were blazing not toward him but at the Dark Ones. But it was well not to put devils to too much trouble to help him; he himself must do all he could.

The Dark Men had turned in consternation. Like a tiger, Jon was upon them, and the heads of two were cleft from behind. Now the Red Devils were closing upon them; but before they reached them, one more had fallen to Jon's ax. Two were left. One Red Devil was closing with a Dark Man—a young Red Devil, and even more slender than the others. But he fought like a man—or like a devil.

One Dark Man disengaged. To him Jon sprang, but three more axes bit even as he did. The last man was just pitching forward on his face, and blood gushed from a wound on the young Red Devil's shoulder. Already the fight was over. Jon placed his foot on a fallen man, raised his war-ax high above his head, and sent his piercing yell echoing through the forest. Then the ax dropped to his side, and he stood waiting. If the Red Devils killed him now, he would be assured of a high seat at the Sky-god's table!

He heard the pattering of feet running behind him—the girl! She flashed by him, and threw herself on the bleeding chest of the youngest Red Devil. And Jon gasped, for her head was crowned with flame too! No, not flame, for had he not touched it and it had not burned? It must, after all, be hair—but hair of such color as he had never seen before on man or beast.

Now the young Red Devil was coming toward him. His face was no longer terrible, but handsome to look upon. He had passed his ax to his left hand, and was holding out the right. It was the signal of truce—they would hold each other's right hands that they might talk without fearing each other.

But the young one did not long hold Jon's hand. He dropped it as though he had no fear, and touched his chest:

"Belderem," he said.

Jon touched his own: "Jon."

"Jon!" The young one stepped back a pace, his eyes opening. Again he spoke; Jon caught the word "Hulphr It was pronounced curiously—"Hul-phur"—but he understood. Again he touched his chest, this time with pride

"Jon—Hulphr."

The eyes of the Red Ones were now wide, and they glanced from one to the other, talking in a strange tongue. Jon saw that they knew his name, and the name of his tribe—saw, strangest of all, that they held him in high honor, if not awe. One pointed to the blue tattooing and nodded solemnly.

And then the five older ones dropped their axes and came forward unarmed, to tell their names in tones of respect.

Last came the girl. She stood before Jon, but waited for the young Red One to tell her name—perhaps it was the custom of the Red Ones that a girl might not tell a man her name. The young one spoke:

"Zirabu."

Again Jon touched his chest and spoke his own name. Now the young one was trying to make Jon understand something else—what could it be? And suddenly Jon glancing puzzled from one to the other, understood. They were brother and sister—he had saved the life of a Red Devil's sister! He was in luck!

The giant elk started to whirl, tried to strike, but the man eluded him.

And this surely must be some young chief of the Devils. True, he had no tattooing on his chest, but who knows what strange customs devils may have? A chief—more likely the son of a chief; but why did he not have the crossed spears on his chest? Of course he could not have a circle under them, for that would mean a Hulphr, but there would be the sign of his tribe. Devils must be savages.

Now they were all grouped around Jon, talking and nodding. None of them looked terrible now; they were almost grinning at him with respectful approval, as one brave warrior to another. Devils! Why, they were men—but the Sky-god alone knew what strange tribe! And the girl, Zirabu? Was she not fair indeed, with her hair of flaming red and her long oval face! Fairer even than Farsa. . . . Jon turned his eyes from her suddenly; it would not do to think such things! Farsa was his wife, and a wife with whom no man could find fault, and he loved her dearly.

They were inviting him to come with them to the caves of their people. Nothing could be better! Up the trail they went, and Jon stopped to get his spear, pouch, and tiger-skin from the brush where he had left them that he might fight unhampered. He draped the skin across his shoulder, but the others took his spear and pouch from him gently and respectfully; they would not permit him to carry a burden!

In less than an hour they arrived in a little glade flanked by neat-walled caves where lived the Red Folk—already Jon had ceased to think of them as devils. The whole tribe came running to meet them, a tumultuous mob. But there was one who ran faster than the rest, a slender girl whose long hair streaming behind was yellow as Jon's own. Jon gasped quickly, and his arms went out toward her. Norna, his sister—whom the Dark Men had stolen!

"Norna, dear sister!"

"Oh, my brother, Jon!" she cried, clasping him close.

Tears came to Jon's eyes, he knew not why. His little sister Norna, alive and unharmed! And then his brow clouded:

"So, Norna, it was Red Men, and not the Dark, who stole you from our people and held you captive?"

"No, no, my brother! A small band of the Dark Men stole me; but even as they carried me off, the Red Ones came on them and killed them all. My leg had been broken as I struggled with the Dark Men, so the Red People took me here and nursed me carefully until I was well."

"Sister, that is many moons ago. Why did you not return to our people, if you were not a captive here?"

"The forest trail is long; the wild beasts are many; and I am a girl, not a hunter."

"Since when have you feared the forest—you who would hunt like a man if the laws of our tribe permitted it?"

"Ah, but the Dark Men—they frightened me!"

"Have you been well treated here?"

"More than well! I was well treated from the very first; and then, when I had begun to speak the strange tongue and told them that I was the daughter of a chief, the chief of the Red-Hairs took me to his own cave. Since then I have been as his daughter, and I have learned to love him even as I do our own father. Comes the chief now!"

The mob split, and toward Jon came a tall, elderly man of noble bearing and grave but kindly face. He asked a question or two; but with everyone talking at once, it seemed that he could not understand. He beckoned to one of those whom Jon had met—the oldest and most burly—and spoke. Norna translated in a whisper:

"He says Foulor has the greatest chest—that he should tell the people what happened, while the rest be silent."

A grin came to Foulor's face—he seemed flattered by the honor—and he raised his hand for silence. Then he spoke at length, and while he did, so Norna translated:

"He is telling them of watching from a bluff while, unaided, you slew three Dark Men without having your hair ruffled."

"But why do they bow down, and look at with aw

"He has told them that you are Jon, the mighty hunter of whom I had told them."

"Just what *have* you told them?" Jon glanced at her suspiciously. Norna always had been given to inventing tales of her big brother's prowess.

"I—I— Should I not make the name of my tribe and my brother great?" She shifted her feet, abashed.

Jon spoke again, sternly: "The Red Man has finished speaking. Say you to the chief that you have lied to him about me. No, you may not go away!"

She spoke quickly, her face pink. There was a pause, and the old chief answered in dignified tones. Again she translated, her eyes snapping in triumph:

"Brother, he says that you now lie—that five men, including his own son, bear witness to your deeds. He says that I spoke true—that you are a hero such as one's grandfather's grandfather told not of. Now he is giving orders that a great feast be prepared, because you have honored him by saving his daughter and visiting his caves."

"And what is he saying to me now?"

"He—he— It does not matter!" Her face was scarlet, and she hung her head.

"Speak, girl!" he commanded sternly.

"He says that his son Belderem has nō wife, and that I—I—"

"Oh-ho! Now I see why you feared to take the forest trail back to your people! Tell him that I have seen his son brave in the fight, and I shall intercede with my father, who is chief. Nay, further, tell him that I promise my father's consent!"

She spoke, and the old chief nodded approvingly. From the crowd slipped young Belderem, to stand beside Norna, pride and happiness on his face as he glanced from his newly battle-scarred chest to the fair-haired girl who was to be his wife.

"What says he now, sister?"

"He says that the Dark Men are almost twice the numbers of the red-haired folk."

"Ahu! So are they almost twice the numbers of the fair-haired ones!"

"And now he says that the Red Ones and the Fair Ones together, both men of the forest and the North, would be greater than the numbers of the Dark Men!"

"Ahu! Tell him, by the holy sycamore, to speak no more! It was that we might fight the Dark Ones shoulder to shoulder that I came to his caves! The light hair and the red hair shall not vanish from the north while pines grow and there are sands on the seashore! We shall chant the war-chant together!"

IN the silence she spoke, everyone seeming to hang on her words. And then a great sigh passed over the crowd, ending in a wild cheer of joy. At last the Dark Ones should be driven back into the South from which they came! At last a fair-skinned girl would be safe! The old man had both hands on Jon's shoulders, and a fierce joy was on his countenance.

"What says he now, sister?"

"He says that a full three days will it take to prepare the feast in your honor, and while you remain here, you share his own cave with him as his equal."

"It is well!"

"And here is Zirabu, brother. She wishes to lead you to the cave, that she may show it to you, and that she may prepare your meal with her own hands. Brother, such honors will swell your chest so that soon you will not speak to mere Norna! I think I shall tell them of the time you tripped on a root, fell in the mud-hole, and I jumped on your back and held you down."

"Yes, tell them, sister!" Jon encouraged, smiling.

"But no! I shine in the reflected glory of Jon—why should I spoil the fun? Go with Zirabu, Jon. But hold! Have you yet married Farsa, as you said you would?"

"Farsa now lives in my hut."

"Devils in oaks! I never liked the vixen! Zirabu is twice the girl Farsa is—too bad we are not like the Dark Men, who have many wives!"

"Swear not, sister!" Jon glared at her. "What are the forests coming to, when girls swear like hunters?"

THE morning of the third day dawned clear. The sun had not yet risen when a shrill voice broke the silence.

Down in front of the caves stalked a withered figure, clad in skins dyed in fantastic colors. In his hand was a great rattle formed of the claws of eagles and the teeth of tigers, all surmounted by the tail of a fox. The high-pitched voice penetrated to the farthest cave:

"Arise, ari-i-ise, all ye people, and gather to the council-ground, for today is spread the great feast! The great feast to honor him who is called Jon the hero, the great hunter, the handsome one—he who slew seven of the Dark Ones without his hair being ruffled."

Jon, sitting before the cave, heard a giggle beside him.

"Jon, my brother, that is why I called you early, that you might see this—a custom unknown to our people."

"What says he, sister?"

"Ahu! That I will never tell you, brother! Your chest would grow and you might forget that you are the little Jon who played with me on the sands by the sea. By the sycamore, but listen to him! Have you had words with the wise man, Jon?"

"I gave him some marten skins I knew not what to do with. It is well always to be friends with a wise man, no matter what his tribe."

"Aho! So that is it! But it is well—his magic is said to be very great."

Jon glanced over his shoulder to see that they were alone.

"Sister, there is much magic among those Red Folk—may it not be that they are devils after all, disguised as men and women?"

"What mean you, brother?"

Again he glanced cautiously around. "The girl Zirabu—did you not know that she has great magic? Whenever I am near her, my heart is troubled—it is well that this is my last day here, for every day her spell closes on me more. Now I dare not meet her eye, for I fear her magic."

"Zirabu loves you, Jon—that is her only magic. I am her friend, and she has told me of waking in your strong arms, of crouching behind your knees while you fought six Dark Ones from her—even then she loved you."

"Silence, girl! Did you not tell her that Farsa, the fair one, dwells in my hut and in my cave?"

"Woe is me, that I had to tell her, and—"

Out of the corner of his eye, Jon saw the red-haired girl coming from the cave. He sprang to his feet.

"Sister," he said quickly, "let us go to the council-ground. Already the people gather there."

The council-ground lay just beyond the caves, in a slight widening of the little valley. In the middle of it was a mound perhaps eight feet high, topped by a rude altar of stone. The wise man's steady progress had by this time brought him to the mound, and now every person of the tribe was behind him.

The wise man's voice rose:

"Hearken to me, people of the caves, while I tell you of Jon the hunter, the Hulphr. Well does he love the gods, and well they him. Came to me in the night three gods, shining of face. Said they to me: 'Behold, we v. tell why the arm of Jon the Hulphr is mighty. Make known to the people that he is the son of the gods Make

known that he pleases us greatly, for did he not go to you, our servant, our priest, and bring you presents, and give to you great respect. Look—"

But a sudden cry from the crowd drowned his voice. And Jon saw a lone figure come running, staggering, from the forest—a twisted, bent little figure that he could not mistake: Gardu, the crooked man! Jon pushed his way through the crowd, and ran to meet him.

"Gardu! What has happened? What brings you here?"

"Jon! Oh, Jon! Thank the gods whom I sometimes doubted, that you still be alive!"

"What, man, has happened?"

"Evil, evil! On the day you left our camp, your father died. Even while we prepared his grave, scouts came to tell that the Dark Men gathered together like flies around rotten meat. Why should they gather, if not to bring war to the Hulphr?"

"Ahu! And the Hulphr-folk chief-less!"

"Not so, O Jon! For your cousin Amaru has named himself chief and caused the blue marks to be tattooed on his chest."

"He has done that—while I live!"

"Jon, he said that you had gone to the mountains to defy the Red Devils and fight them—that he tried to persuade you not to, but you would not listen. Who could defy devils and live? And if he did live, would not the Hulphr-folk drive him into the forest as one who would bring misfortune on all the people?"

"Ahu! Could he lie so!"

"O Jon, I knew he spoke falsely! And so I took my twisted frame into the forest to seek you. Last evening I came on this place, and thought I saw you, as I peered from the forest. But then I thought I saw Norna, your sister who is dead, so I knew it was but your spirit which the Red Devils had taken, and the spirit of your sister, who is fair. All night I hid in a tall tree, that beasts could not kill me, and this morning I saw you come to this place, Norna with you. In the dusk of the evening I fear the devils, but now the sun is rising—well, here I am."

"Does Amaru prepare the people for battle?"

"Woe, woe on the people! Amaru hangs his head in fear, and the people sit sullen in their huts while the Dark Ones gather!"

"And when did you leave the people?"

"On the day after you left. Woe! Do any of the fair-haired ones now live—any but our young girls who are in the arms of the Dark Men?"

Jon whirled, raising the gathering-call of his people:

"Axes! Axes in hand! Spears on shoulders! War! War!"

The Red Folk stared dumbly at him. But Norna had thrown herself on the old chief's breast and was talking quickly and brokenly through her sobs. Suddenly the old chief pushed her from him roughly and raised his hand. From his mouth came a cry that Jon could not understand, but it could be no other than a gathering-cry. Immediately it was taken up by the throng until the forest shook. The mob was breaking; men and women were running to the caves, shouting the gathering-cry as they went. On the hillock the old wise man chanted fiercely and cast scraps of meat into the fire.

IN almost less time than it takes to tell it, the crowd was back. Battle-axes and spears flashed in the sun. Around the warriors were the younger women with bundles on their backs and cooking-pots in their hands—the pre-tenders of the war-camp. A moment the crowd paused around the hillock, while the wise man spread his hands over them, chanting wildly. And then, Jon in the lead, they were trotting into the forest.

A great awe came over Jon, as he ran. The ways of the Sky-god were wonderful, and past the understanding of man. From the mouth of a liar had come a prophecy that was being fulfilled—he, Jon, ran to rescue his people with the horde of the Red Ones at his back! The Sky-god grant that the rest of the prophecy be fulfilled—that they arrive in time!

TROTTING down a dark, narrow glade, Jon scanned the trees on both sides carefully. At last he saw what he wanted—a great sycamore, a sycamore such as he had never seen before, with wide-spreading branches. He changed his course to pass beneath it; and as he passed, he crouched as low as he could, head bent, and both hands spread far in front of him, humbly. Once he glanced back. The horde behind him followed his example, perhaps not knowing what it signified. It was well—surely the gods would now make their feet light and their axes strong!

The sun was setting when they came to where the camp of the Hulphr had been—but was no more. Some huts were overturned, some burned to the ground. Here and there, like a gaunt skeleton, stood a meat-drying rack, scraps of elk meat still hanging on the cross-poles over the dead smoke-fires. Jon's head sank, and his ax dropped to his side.

"We are too late—all things have ended."

But a young hunter was running toward him. He had found tracks beyond the camp. The Hulphr-folk had deserted the camp, running toward the north, and a day behind them had followed the horde of the Dark Ones on their trail. This had the tracks told.

A council was called quickly. Jon wanted to push on at night—but no man traveled the forest at night, when devils were abroad. The old wise man screwed up his wrinkled face and listened silently. Jon wondered how he had kept up with them. He did not know the wise one had caused two strong warriors to hold a spear between them on which he had rested his hands while he ran, that his feet might be light. Then the wise man spoke:

"The words of Jon are good—but the gods have not revealed all to him as they have to me, a priest. They command that we eat quickly and follow the trail to the north. We should keep close together and make much noise, and the gods have promised that no devil may come within two spear-throws of our band. And they also commanded that I, the wise man, travel in the center of our horde, with two strong warriors to assist me. Thus spoke the gods."

"It is well!" shouted Jon, when this had been translated to him. "Let the women not start fires, for we eat cold food and start quickly."

And so they traveled, far into the night, before they at last threw themselves on the ground for a scant sleep before the sky grew gray again. And so, day and night, the miles were left swiftly behind them, until at last, from a hill, they saw a great shining plain before them. Here some of the Red Folk paused, and murmured in fear:

"It is the lake of poisonous water that stretches beyond the end of the earth, of which our wise men have told us, and out of which come terrible beasts that no man may stand against. We dare not go further."

"It is but the sea, beside which my people live!" assured Jon. "And out of it comes naught but fish that are good to eat, and shellfish, and other good things."

"Our wise man says not so. We go no further."

The wise man was called, and listened to all that was said on both sides before he spoke:

"Foolish folk, it is as Jon says. That lake of salt water brings good. But beyond it is the lake of poison water

where devils dwell, and beware ye not to go there! Go ye forward."

Still they followed the trail of the Hulphr, and of the Dark Folk after them. And suddenly they came upon something that made Jon shudder. Tied to a tree, his body horribly mangled, was a man whose yellow hair hung down on his shoulders. The ghastly face raised weakly, for the man still lived, and Jon recognized Amaru, his cousin, who had usurped his place. But his heart filled with pity, and he ran forward.

"O cousin, what has befallen thee? I, Jon, forgive all!"

But Amaru did not hear. He only saw Jon come running, and behind him a horde of the Red Devils themselves, in full battle array. They were coming for his soul! The eyes of Amaru distended horribly, and his head fell forward in death. Jon spoke quickly:

"Zirabu," he said, "my wounds are slight, but need dressing." With a cry she ran to him.

"My cousin is beyond help, but there are others who will suffer the same fate if we be not in time. May the gods give his soul peace!"

On they went. An hour later Jon suddenly stopped and raised his hand for silence. From far ahead in the forest came a sound he recognized.

"It is the war-cry of the Hulphr! They make a stand at their home caves—and without a chief!"

With difficulty the Red Ones were kept silent. They trotted forward, their feet making a loud sighing sound on the pine-needles beneath. And then Jon, who was in the lead, paused on the edge of the forest, motioning the rest back. Peering forth, he saw—

The tide was out, and the men of Hulphr stood with their heels washed by ripples of the ocean. They stood in a close group, faces to the foe—they had chosen the beach as battle-ground, that they would have one less front to guard. Grimly they stood, spear and ax in hand, but their war-yells were faint and half-hearted, for were they not leaderless?

Halfway between them and Jon, in the middle of the broad strip of yellow sand, were the Dark Men. Their cries were loud enough! Their chant rang out exultant, for were their numbers not far greater than those of the yellow-hairs? And did not the fair men crowd together half in panic, as though they were leaderless? Slowly the chant went on—where was need for hurry, with the yellow-hairs trapped? Time enough would come the battle, if battle it could be called!

Jon turned. Beside him was the chief of the Red Folk, looking pale and weak—how he had ever kept the grueling night-and-day pace Jon could not understand. Norna was there too, although the other women had hidden themselves in the forest—a translator was needed. But Norna's face was not pale, but flushed, and her eyes blazed. Now she and her people would be avenged on the Dark Ones who had stolen her! And was she not the daughter of a chief? Her glance went to Belderem.

"Belderem, fight you like a man and a hero! To you, O brother, I need not speak thus, for all know the strength that is in your arm and in your heart."

"Sister, when we leave the woods, run you back and hide with the other women." Then Jon spoke to the chief through her:

"O chief, would it not be well if you told your men to scatter along the edge of the wood, so that they may sweep forward like the horns of the new moon and encircle the Dark Ones?"

"Jon, your plan sounds good to me. If I cannot run so fast as the younger men, take you the lead in the battle. I shall make this known to my warriors."

He was turning away, but Jon stopped him:

"Hold! If my people see the Red Ones, whom they think devils, come charging toward them, they will think they are lost indeed and throw down their axes. Let no man leave the forest until I give the gathering-cry of my people, which men utter when they come together to fight shoulder to shoulder. Then shall my people know that all is well."

"It shall be done, O young chief!"

He hurried away, and Jon turned quickly to Belderem, with Norna to translate:

"Belderem, your father is a great warrior, but old; it would be ill if he fell in the fight. Take you ten strong warriors and stand to his shoulder, that he may have help if the fight go not well with him."

The young man strode quickly forward and placed both hands on Jon's shoulders, then darted away.

Now the chant of the Dark Ones ended suddenly in a great cry, as each of them held his ax aloft. And now, slowly but steadily, they were marching down the beach toward their intended victims. The Light-hairs stood close together, their front bristling with spears held level. Well Jon knew that they would drop the spears before the Dark Ones came to them, for the Hulphr had little confidence in the spear, except for the hunt. In the momentary silence, a deep voice rose on the still air:

"Ho! Jon, chief of the Hulphr-folk, stands here, with help for his people!"

A cry of amazement went up from the Hulphr, and the Dark Men whirled to see who had shouted. And again Jon's voice rose,—as he beckoned toward the forest, that all men might see,—in the Hulphr gathering-cry:

"Axes! Axes in hand! Spears on shoulders! War! War!"

A savage yell rang high. From along the edge of the forest swept the red-haired men, closing in at each end that no Dark Man might escape. From beyond the Dark Ones, Jon heard the wild war-yell of his people—no longer faint, but ringing triumphant to the heavens. His own throat echoed it, and he was plunging forward, at his back the horde of the Red Ones.

LONG was that fight talked of over camp-fires and in caves; to this day traces of it linger in the folk-lore of people who dwell in cabins by the sea—for on that sand it was decided that light-hairs and red-hairs should not vanish from the earth, but should people the north while there are pines in the forest.

Tales are told of the great numbers Jon slew with his own ax, and of the bravery of Belderem. And it is said that a yellow-haired girl, Norna, stood on the sand outside the edge of the forest and shouted encouragement to the warriors, and leaped up and down in wildness at sight of the battle—a girl well fit to be the mother of warriors!

Another thing is told: that but one Dark Man escaped alive from the sand, and as he ran through the forest, he came upon a band of red-haired women who slew him with the spears their menfolk had dropped, so that no Dark Man lived to tell the tale. And the bodies of the slain Dark Men were cast into the sea, that the current might carry them north into the land of ice, where they would freeze forever, and never know the sunshine again, in this world or the next.

Then from the forest came the young women of the Red-Hairs who were fire-tenders in the war-camps, that they might dress the wounds of the warriors, as was their duty. Among them came Zirabu. And then, from farther back, came the yellow-haired women, that they might do like duty by their own men.

Jon stood alone, none coming forward to dress his wounds. At last he turned to a Hulphr:

"Palem, where is Farsa, my wife? Why does she not come to see if I am hurt?"

"O chief, ask another if you know not—I do not wish your ax to cleave my skull when I tell you!"

"Speak, man, or truly your skull shall be cleft!"

"Then know, O chief of my people, that when it was known that the Dark Ones drew close, she fled with Amaru, your cousin, into the forest, and neither has been seen since."

"What! She too plotted against me, and helped to send me to what she thought was my death!" And he added: "Amaru, my treacherous cousin, is no more—the gods punished him fittingly."

A youth pushed forward:

"Some of our women, hiding during the battle, came upon Farsa, hidden. They had spears of the menfolk, and they—"

"Peace, boy!" shouted Palem, in terror of Jon's fury.

Jon spoke slowly and sadly: "It is a judgment on the Sky-god, whose servant I am."

He saw his sister Norna, coming forward, pulling gently at the arm of a red-haired girl.

"Zirabu," he said gently, "my wounds are slight, but need dressing—and I have no women-folk to do it. Dare I ask the beautiful Zirabu, daughter of a chief, to stanch the flow of blood?"

With a little cry she ran to him, her face glowing like the sun on the ocean before them. Her hands were very soft—as were her eyes. Jon spoke again, stiffly, but with the color coming to his face:

"Sister, the chief of the Red-Hairs stands beside you. Would you ask him— I mean, say it might be well—"

"Never mind—I'll ask him!" She grinned impishly at him, and turned to chatter something in the strange tongue as though she had been born to it. The face of the old chief lighted with joy, as did Belderem's; Zirabu's was bent over a slight wound on Jon's shoulder and could not be seen. Norna turned, shrugged her shoulders, and spoke:

"The chief says take her if you want her; his son is being married to me—and that is *really* important."

"Did he say that?" Jon gasped uncertainly.

"Certainly not! But I'm not going to swell your big chest further by telling you what he did say; wait till Zirabu teaches you her tongue—or she learns ours."

But the old chief was speaking further, and his words Norna translated now with the dignity of a princess:

"Jon, it is well that a double tie should bind the yellow-hair with the red-haired folk—it is very well. By your age you shall be my son, and by your station you shall be my equal. Never shall the red men and the fair men face each other in battle, but always shall they stand shoulder to shoulder."

Jon answered:

"O Chief, and red-haired men: a great feast shall be prepared for you, to celebrate our victory, and our two weddings. Send swift runners back to bring your old folks and children from your caves, that they may feast here on the sand by the sea with us. And when the feast is over, we shall show you spacious caves not twenty spear-throws from here, where the Red Ones might dwell if they chose. There is hunting for all in the forest, and my people would show yours how to build skin boats, that they might take fish from the sea."

This translated, the old chief turned to his wise man.

"What think you of his words, wise man? Our mountains are cold in winter; the snow lies deep and long. As I grow old, the devils gnaw at my joints in the cold weather. It is milder here by the sea."

"Great chief, they gnaw at my joints too—for our winters are indeed long. The gods tell me that it is a sign that we should do as Jon asks, and move our possessions down here where it is warmer. Red hair shall mix with yellow, till no man shall know what color his son may have till it be born. But the tribe shall be doubled in size and strength, that it may hold the forests of the North while pines grow, and never shall it bend its neck to the Dark Man of the South. For the two tribes shall be as one while pines grow in the forest."

"It is well, wise man. Let runners be sent for our old ones."

Then down the beach, toward the caves of the Hulphr, marched the light-haired ones and the red-haired ones, men and women. They were mingled together, trying by signs to understand each other.

FOLLOWING slowly behind came two young men and two young women, two fair-haired and two red. But fair did not walk with fair, nor red with red. Those couples made no signs, spoke no words, for looking into each other's eyes they understood more than tongue can say.

Thus came Zirabu, the red-haired girl, to the cave of Jon, and there was great joy in the hearts of both, for had not the Sky-god himself brought them together?

THE END

REAL EXPERIENCES

In nearly everyone's life there has been at least one specially exciting adventure; and this department is devoted to short stories of these, told by your fellow-readers. (For details of our prize offer for these stories, see page 3 of this issue.) Here one of our women readers describes what happened when she thought herself called upon to defend her home from a marauder.

Murder and Mirth

By **Nancy Spencer Kip**

ONE need not ship before the mast or penetrate the fastness of Amazonian jungles in order to find adventure; those who stay close at home face often the gravest dangers, commit the wildest deeds and live through the most amazing experiences.

Allow me to cite, as a case in point, a weird yet excruciatingly funny chapter out of my own simple and apparently uneventful life. It has to do with a winter morning several years ago when I struck down a strange man, mercilessly and with full intent to kill, in the basement of my own home in a great Midwestern city.

My husband traveled at that time for a local manufacturing concern. It was my business, naturally, to stay at home with our two children. Our boy was three and a half then, and our little girl almost five.

While my husband was out covering his Eastern territory, a wave of crime swept the city. It positively refused to confine itself to any certain section. Newspapers were rife with items such as: "East Side Husband Nabs Prowler, Alleges Attack On Wife; West Side Host Shoots Bridge Party Bandit; Society Matron Faints As Masked Man Enters Bedroom And Escapes With Jewelry; Professor's Wife In University Square Slapped By Burglar Surprised In Clothes Closet."

Right in our own decorous neighborhood an elderly couple were wakened from sleep in the downstairs spare bedroom of their daughter's home when some one tampered with a window-screen. The old lady screamed, and the burglars fled, leaving a jumble of footprints and a huge cheese-knife in the snow beneath the window. I saw the footprints and the knife—and involuntarily I shuddered.

I tried not to be afraid. I never had been afraid before. I had stoutly contended always that if a woman behaved herself and took care to make no displays of money or other valuables, she need never fear intrusion. Against my will, I started to lose faith in my precious theory. I put newspapers aside unread for many days, only to find that inescapable conversations with friends inflamed my imagination even more than the printed word.

Hard as I tried to be casual about the locking of windows and bolting of doors, I found myself making furtive tours of inspection after my children were asleep, to make sure that each outside door had its customary barricade of toy-fire-engines and doll-carriages.

One morning, after listening intently all night for stealthy noises from the stairway and windows, I called my husband's boss and asked him to loan me a gun. He demurred at first, but decided I'd get one somewhere, so sent out a thirty-eight-caliber revolver with explicit instructions for its use. Fear of the weapon, in some measure, counteracted my fear of thieves and murderers.

I'd actually started to progress a bit along the path to peace when a hideous story broke and flooded the newspapers of every State in the Union. In a little Ohio village, a preacher's wife was cremated in her own furnace by some person, or persons, unknown. Her husband and children, returning from a trip to town, found her charred body inside the furnace. The furnace door was tightly closed, and it was conceded she was alive when thrust inside.

It is hard to understand now why I ever allowed that thing to grip my imagination as it did. The thought of that poor woman suffering the torments of hell while members of her family supposed her to be studying her Bible-class

lesson or frosting a cake followed me through all my days and thrust itself into the dreams I had at night.

TWO days before my husband was due to arrive from the East, I decided to clean the cellar. My little girl, arrayed in finery from the discarded-clothing box, helped her brother operate a small red tractor on the cement floor. I was setting my first basket of ashes on the snow outside the cellar door, when the telephone rang. Both youngsters trailed after me as I went to answer it.

A friend was calling. She talked for twenty minutes about her husband's recent raise in salary; about the dance they'd attended at the University Club and about an incredibly wicked mutual friend who borrowed a dozen of her fine napkins, inherited from a great-aunt, and returned them just that morning, one napkin short.

The basement door had blown wide open when I resumed my duties; the house was cold, and after carrying out the rest of the ashes, I carefully locked it and proceeded to fire the furnace.

A blood-curdling yell from my daughter stopped every function of my body just as I stooped to take up my second shovelful of coal; her little person was stiff and her eyes wide with horror. She was pointing at the fruit-closet door, declaring in wild tones that a man was inside.

A man in the cellar! Oh, dear God! My throat muscles thickened until I choked; my legs felt like butter in August. Had he come in while I was telephoning, or had he lurked in the house all night? Somehow I got the coal into the furnace and closed the door, trying to think meanwhile of some scheme that would save us from being consumed with it.

The fruit-closet was concealed from me by an angle of the coalbin. I fixed those children with a stern eye and motioned them over to me. I tried to sound convincing when I assured them nobody except ourselves was in the house. I told them that; but oh, I knew—I knew that any second we'd be stunned with a blunt instrument, bound, gagged, perhaps burned! I took a new grip on the shovel.

Amazing strength flowed steadily into my arms and legs.

I advanced to the closet door, confronted it—just as a man stepped out from behind. A miserable, cringing, rat-faced fellow! His eyes were bloodshot and his mouth worked like that of a fish. Deep in my soul, I prayed God not to let me miss. I raised that heavy steel shovel and brought it down on his blue-striped cap. He wore a black sweater under the coat of his brown suit, and chips of whitewash flaked off the wooden partition as he crumpled and sagged against it.

I stepped gingerly past him, a little hand in each of mine, and went to telephone the police. A neighbor was using the line. As I sat trying to formulate a report to police headquarters, my poor heart sank, then rocketed into my throat as the door between kitchen and cellar opened and closed. I started up frenziedly just as my wee daughter flounced in and handed me a small black book. She confessed she'd gone down to see if the bad man was still dead.

I glanced idly at the book's pages. It was a meter-reader's record-book; the last entry had been made under my next-door neighbor's address. Good heavens!

I DEFERRED my call to the police, and went down cellar to see if I had actually killed a man who entered my home on business, through an open door, while I sat listening to a woman on the telephone.

Blood trickled from a gash at the edge of his hair but at least he wasn't dead.

I sent upstairs for mustard and smelling-salts, and distasteful as the job was, set about reviving him. I grabbed a towel from the wash-basket, soaked it in cold water and placed it on his head; removed his wet, heavy shoes and socks and put his big ugly feet in hot mustard water.

The telephone rang. I dashed up and set the receiver off the hook. It gurgled and snapped while I held smelling-salts under my victim's nose and changed cold towels on his head. He snored loudly, raucously; but try as I would, my ministrations failed to affect him. The telephone was now making a terrific fuss.

Finally the telephone stopped, but the snore continued strong as ever; I worked desperately, feverishly. Then the doorbell started to ring. I caught my daughter's frock just in time. She would have answered it! It rang and rang. One long peal lasted at least two minutes. Fools! Why didn't they go?

I was soaking a towel at the stationary tub when my baby shouted that he saw another man. Well, that was too much—I was ready to quit! I thought the children hysterical when they jumped up and down and laughed as they waved toward the opposite window. I looked up, and sure enough, there stood a man.

But what a man! This one was different. Tall and dark, with a thick gray belted overcoat and a felt hat that swept his brow with just a hint of rakishness. He had a crooked smile and fine straight legs. It was my husband!

I stumbled up the steps, unlocked the door and was swept with both children into his arms. He'd finished in a hurry at Buffalo, would have two extra days at home, tried for half an hour to get me from the office, then jumped into a taxi and came out to see what the dickens was the matter.

WE showed him the man and told him the story. Why, it was nothing to worry about, at all. Leave it to him. He'd fix everything. He crammed his gloves into his pockets and leaned down for a look at the shovel victim.

"You must have clunked him a dandy," he said. "Here, take the kids and run along upstairs. Sit down in a chair and relax. I'll have this bird out of here in five minutes. Say, did you try giving the lad a shot of Scotch?"

I told him I hadn't—didn't even know we had any. Sure, he said. A whole quart, right there on the shelf behind the canned pears. Never mind, he'd get it. Knew exactly where it was.

I started the percolator before going upstairs to wash.

My husband appeared presently before the bathroom door, grinning broadly and assuring me that the bird had flown, book and all. Well, I said to myself, that Scotch must be powerful stuff.

Later, over a cup of coffee and a scrambled-egg sandwich, he told me how he'd gone about reviving my victim.

"All it took," he said, "was one good, swift kick. Worked like a charm! You should have seen him take the air!" My husband chuckled violently—but I saw nothing comical about kicking a helpless man. I tried to be tactful:

"Why on earth did you kick the poor fellow?" I asked.

"Darling," enlightened the man of my heart, "I kicked the big bum because he was dead drunk. You hadn't more than stunned him. He was full of my good liquor. I found my bottle behind that door, two-thirds empty!"

Well, that *was* different. He rocked with laughter.

"Boy, I never hope to see anything funnier in my life," he said, "than the way that guy looked when I gave him the boot. Flew through the air like a Hindu fakir, barefooted and with that big white rag on his head. I threw his book out after him. Lucky that door was unlatched; the way he was traveling, he'd have taken hinges and all."

A fresh panic loomed. What about the neighbors?

"Yeah," said my lord and master, dropping four lumps of sugar into his coffee. "What about 'em? Probably never find it out."

And even the snoopiest of them never did.

Three Close Calls

One of General Funston's scouts tells of one crowded day in the Philippines when he three times narrowly escaped death.

By **Jack Ganzhorn**

FRESH from the back of a cow-pony in southern Arizona, and although only a kid of nineteen counted "fast on the draw," I was one of the twelve scouts attached to the staff of Brigadier-general Frederick Funston, during the Philippine insurrection.

On all of our rides with the General's forces, to protect them from being "dry-gulched," two of us scouts always rode the "point"—a distance of about two hundred yards ahead.

This morning, the morning of my big day, on October 23, 1900, I was riding the point. My side-kick, Bates, a half-breed Pawnee Indian, was with me. General Funston and his aid Lieutenant Mitchell, with Major Doctor Harris, and twenty men of Troop A of the Fourth Cavalry, under Lieutenant Morrisson, rode in file at a safe distance behind.

Where the trail broke from a bamboo thicket into a stretch of abandoned rice-fields, I pulled up at a wide mudhole. Rather than look for a way around it, I urged my horse in and he floundered belly-deep. Spurring him out onto solid ground, I left Bates to guide the others around the hole, and rode out into the open.

The carabao trail I was following at this point ran alongside a creek heavily skirted with bamboo, and led to a house on the bank about fifty yards ahead. Like all other Filipino houses or shacks, this one was built on a platform six feet above the ground. The only opening in view was what served for a window, merely a section of the nipa-thatched wall possibly three feet square, hinged at the top with *bahooka* (something like rattan), and propped open with a piece of bamboo.

Seeing no pigs or chickens rooting or scratching around, nor any other signs of life, I gave the house no further thought; dropping the bridle-reins, I allowed my horse to plod along at a walk, and turning sideways in the saddle, I scanned the country beyond the rice-fields, with the General's glasses.

Finding nothing of interest, I dropped the glasses into the case hanging from my shoulder; then as my horse nickered and stopped, I jerked around square into my saddle. I found myself directly in front, and within four feet of the shack's window. My head and shoulders were on a level with the opening. There, staring into my astonished face, was a *gugu* shoving a short-barreled shotgun straight toward me.

I was absolutely petrified. Every muscle in my body was as tight as a new barbed-wire fence. Talk about being paralyzed—why, I couldn't even bat an eyelash! Say, have you ever looked into the muzzle of a gun when it was as big as the mouth of a cave? Well, the end of that gun, so close I could have hung my hat on it, I'll swear had an opening the size of a rain-barrel. Scared? I'll say I was! I could feel the pit of my stomach turning over. I had thought of grabbing the rifle's muzzle, shoving it aside, and reaching for my six-shooter—but that wouldn't do. He was on the business end, and would only have to twist the butt around, to blow a hole through me. If I tried to jump my horse away from the window, I knew I'd get plugged in the back. Every second I expected to see his finger crooking on the trigger.

It seemed ages that we stared at each other, though two ticks of a watch would have probably covered the time. Reading in his narrowing eyes the intent to shoot, I ducked my head and threw my body forward. A cannonlike roar filled my ears. Hot flame scorched the back of my neck, and singed the yellow fuzz on my right cheek. I didn't know I had shot, or even reached for my gun, until I felt the jump of its recoil in my clenched hand. A red stream gushed from the center of the fellow's throat and he sank to the floor.

Instantly the room was filled with men springing to their feet. The fact that I had ridden up on an outpost, all asleep, was plain to me now. With one corner of my mind registering thanks for the heavy frontier model .45 in my hand, I poured its heavy slugs into them until the hammer clicked, empty.

Two jumps past the window, and I was abreast of the corner of the shack. Here a door opened out onto a small platform or landing with a short ladder down to the ground. Just as I pulled up in this position, the last one of the *gugus* leaped out of the room swinging a rifle to his shoulder. Grinning with satisfaction, he deliberately drew bead on me.

With my six-shooter in its holster empty and my carbine in its boot on the saddle, I realized I was in another tough spot. As I grabbed the butt of my carbine and threw myself to the ground, I knew there was no earthly way I could beat him to the first shot. With not over ten feet between us, he couldn't possibly miss.

While I was never any too anxious for a peek into the next world, I wasn't exactly afraid to die. But I sure didn't crave any burning, steel-jacketed bullet tearing through my vitals. A job at nursing hungry longhorns would have looked mighty good to me right then. I'd have even been willing to ride night-herd in the rain without a slicker.

Dragging my carbine free, with my gaze centered on that rifle, I saw his finger squeeze, and heard the click of the released bolt. . . . The click of his trigger on an empty chamber was real music to me. In the fraction of a second while he was throwing his bolt-action, I thumbed over the cut-off of my carbine and snapped the cap. Though I beat him only by a red hair, the rifle clattered to the bamboo floor, and the *gugu* toppled backward to the ground.

AT my first shot, the bunch had charged to my support hell-bent for leather. Bates, in the lead, was just in time to bust a shell at the falling *gugu*.

Fifteen or twenty of our little brown friends dashed from the house just beyond the one where I had been entertained, and in the skirmish which followed, several were captured.

General Funston was always very successful in persuading a *gugu* to talk. One of these told us his outfit was a part of General Lacuna's forces and that Lacuna was encamped fifteen miles farther on, up in the Bulacan Mountains. We recognized the camp described, as being about five miles into the mountains from Stony Point. So Funston decided to push on, camp there for the night, and make a daylight attack.

With small detachments like this, the General always felt better if some of the scouts mounted guard. Accordingly, after we had finished our supper of "government straight" and given our horses their nose-bags of feed, we drew straws to see who could stand the guard. I drew the last one of the three short straws, which meant the third relief.

Shortly after midnight, "Poco" Robinson routed me out of a sound sleep to take his post. About half awake, I picked up my carbine, saw that there was a shell in the chamber, and stumbled down the trail. A rock the size of a soap-box, where you could sit and lean back against a huge boulder as high as a corral-fence and eight feet long, was our post.

The night was blacker than a chuck-wagon skillet, but I could see fairly well a short distance down the trail. Dog-tired, I settled down on the rock and built a cigarette. Aside from several of the men "sawing wood" in their sleep, the stamp of a horse now and then and the usual night noises of the jungle, all was quiet.

My comfortable seat on the rock didn't help any to keep me awake, and it was a tough job to hold my eyes open. I caught myself nodding again and again. This wouldn't do, so I shook my head and snapped out of it, but not for long.

Finally I got up in desperation, and began pacing up and down the trail.

"Hey, kid!" one of the boys growled. "You aint ridin' herd on no wild bunch! Go sit down. How the hell we gonna get any sleep with you doin' a war-dance?"

WELL, that was that. I planted myself back on the rock, and in a few minutes began fighting my head again like a two-year-old bronc'.

I knew there was grave danger in trying to get a little "shut-eye" while on sentry duty in this country. There had been plenty of cases where some fellow on guard had gone to sleep, and one of our "little brown brothers" had slipped up and chopped his head off, slick and clean. They could do that with one of their bolos. I'm telling you, a blade eighteen inches long and three to four inches wide, with the back edge a half inch thick and the cutting edge sharp as a razor, is sure a wicked piece of hardware! Of course, I wasn't exactly afraid of being knifed, but I knew the gang would give me an awful rawhiding if I let one of those *gugus* slip up on me.

In spite of all I could do, I began to drowse again. The next thing I knew my eyes snapped open, and I found I was scared stiff. Did you ever awaken in the night—wide awake—with a feeling that you were in some awful danger—that if you made the slightest move something terrible would happen to you? That's the way I felt. My mind was as clear as a bell, but I couldn't move a muscle. Maybe none of you ever got so scared that the skin on your forehead drew up as tight as the head of a drum? Mine was like that, and I could feel beads of sweat as cold as ice rolling down my face.

I wasn't trembling any; I was rigid. Something kept hammering into my brain that the unknown danger was just to my left, behind me. I figured I might get away from whatever it was, by leaping straight out in front. But I was afraid to take that chance for fear that my first move would be—my last.

My panic became so great that in desperation I broke the spell. Leaping to my feet I whirled, and with my gun at my hip, fired at the blotchy white shirt on a *gugu*. With his bolo raised over his head, he was in the act of leaping from the boulder to finish me. But he flopped to the ground in a pile, and his big chopping-knife got a nick knocked out where it hit my carbine-barrel.

INSTANTLY the men were gathering around, all asking questions. While the General was frisking the dead *gugu* to see if he carried any papers, Lieutenant Morrisson questioned:

"But, Ganzhorn, how in hell did he get so close to your post?"

"Well, you see how dark it is," I explained in great detail. "I was keeping pretty close watch, an' I caught a glimpse of his shirt as he slipped behind those rocks there. I didn't want to take a chance of missing him, so I waited an' let him crawl up here. Then, when he jumped from cover, I let him have it."

I saw right away my yarn had gone over big with all hands and I felt pretty high on myself. About that time the General stepped up close to me, and patting me on the shoulder, said, real confidential: "Ganzhorn, you did a good job. This has been your lucky day. Now, take my advice—the next time you can't keep awake, get one of the boys to relieve you!"

When You Bail Out

A parachute jump is apt to be a hazardous affair—and when you land in a cactus clump, it's a painful one.

By **Corporal Albert W. Dukes**

"BEEN lost for three hours—don't know where we are—might be over the ocean—guess we'll have to jump." This was the message that Lieutenant Sloan had hastily scrawled and handed back to me in the rear cockpit of the Douglass basic-training ship. Even as I read the note my goggles frosted over again and I raised an uncertain fur-gloved hand to clear the lenses. As the note dropped from my numbed fingers my mind flashed back over the seeming centuries of time that had passed since our take-off from March Field that morning.

We had little suspected the experiences in store for us on that cold clear winter morning as the mechanics helped us into our fur-lined flying-suits, boots, rabbit-skin gloves, and parachutes. When we had completed our equipment with helmets and goggles our resemblances to deep-sea divers (both in appearance and cumbersomeness) was really striking. The weather reports indicated that we would encounter stormy weather, so we had dressed accordingly.

Ten minutes after we had clambered into the cockpits we had left March Field far behind and were flying along at twelve thousand feet altitude. We encountered perfect flying weather for about two and one-half hours. At the end of this time sheets of clouds began to appear around and below us, forcing us to climb to eighteen thousand feet in order to keep above them. Even at this altitude there were clouds above us, so we climbed to nineteen thousand five hundred feet—the absolute ceiling of our ship—in a vain attempt to break through them.

For about a half hour we flew along at this high altitude while the clouds rapidly thickened and closed in on us. The rarefied atmosphere made us exceedingly weak, and our breathing became short and erratic because of the small amount of oxygen existing at this altitude. There was a constant roar in our ears not unlike the sounds emanating from a pond of strong-lunged bullfrogs. As the clouds closed in on us the sound magnified to the point where it seemed as if our eardrums must split. The heavy mist and clouds shut out our view in every direction, forcing us to "fly blind"—that is, fly entirely by instruments.

As if to add to our discomfort, snow suddenly began to fall. In a few minutes our wings were covered with a heavy layer of snow and ice, making the ship much heavier and forcing us to lose altitude rapidly. As the storm increased in intensity and showed no signs of abating, Lieutenant Sloan deemed it wise to turn back and retrace our course. With this object in view, he banked the ship around; but it was impossible to tell anything from our rapidly changing instruments and—as we found out later—we made a complete turn, and were once more flying on our original course.

There followed the worst hour and a half that I have ever experienced. It was impossible to tell even when the ship was level, as we had no visible horizon to judge by. One minute we were diving with the motor wide open at an air speed of one hundred and seventy miles per hour; the next moment the ship would climb until it stalled and fell off into a spin; then we would be in an inverted dive, hanging head-down with only the safety-belts between us and oblivion—at one time we dropped through the air like a plummet for over two thousand feet. Although we were constantly attempting to climb, the snow and ice on our wings was becoming thicker and heavier, slowly forcing us to lose altitude. The sleet frosted over my goggles faster than I could clear them, making it practically impossible to see even the instruments in the cockpit. My right hand was frozen despite my glove, and my legs were rapidly becoming numb. In the midst of all these difficulties Lieutenant Sloan handed me the note saying that we would have to jump. He had made his decision when it became apparent that we could not hold our altitude. It would be foolish to stay with the ship under these conditions, as we knew that the mountains in this general region ranged from nine thousand to twelve thousand feet high.

Just as things seemed at their worst,—as we were div-

ing, slipping, twisting, and falling,—a sudden shaft of sunlight pierced the storm with dazzling brightness. It was like a beacon to a ship at sea, even though it was gone as rapidly as it appeared, making the storm seem even darker by contrast. At least we now knew the direction to climb; Sloan pulled back on the stick and we began to gain altitude again.

This time we climbed until my head swam and I almost fainted in the rarefied atmosphere. When we had reached the absolute ceiling again, Lieutenant Sloan turned off the gas, cut the switches and, putting the ship in a glide, turned and called something to me about the time and the gas. As it was impossible for me to understand what he was calling, I unfastened my safety-belt and, after what seemed an eternity, succeeded in getting my numbed legs over the edge of the cockpit. I was able to hang on only with my left hand, as my frozen right was worse than useless. The wind and sleet almost tore me from the ship, but I finally succeeded in getting my feet on the steps by the front cockpit. From this precarious position I could hear what Sloan was trying to tell me.

"The time's up—our gas must be about gone—we'll have to jump!" he shouted in my ear.

ALL the time the ship was falling; it was now beginning to get out of control. The altimeter was dropping rapidly and was already down to twelve thousand feet. The Lieutenant motioned for me to jump at once. I tried to place my frozen right hand on the rip-cord of my parachute as I knew I would never be able to reach it if I jumped before placing it there. I had no control over my hand, so Lieutenant Sloan, seeing my difficulty, placed my hand on the rip-cord for me. I was so cold that I could not jump, so I merely let go and dropped.

After the first breath-taking drop—the effect of which can never be adequately described, but must be experienced to be fully appreciated—I counted to five in my mind, and attempted to pull the release. To my horror my numbed fingers lacked the strength to pull the release. In sudden terror I pulled twice more, with no better results. Then I seized my right hand with my left and pulled with the strength of desperation. I am certain that my mind would have failed me completely if I had not succeeded in releasing the 'chute on that last attempt!

It seemed to my overwrought nerves as if minutes passed before my 'chute responded, although it actually was only a matter of seconds before the pilot 'chute opened with a crack like a cannon. I must have fallen approximately nine hundred feet before I succeeded in releasing the 'chute, and was therefore falling at the maximum rate of speed when it opened. The resultant jerk when the 'chute blossomed out, almost jerked my arms out and threw me nearly over the top of it. My sensations can scarcely be imagined as I swung back and forth and bobbed all over the sky like an erratic pendulum. The driving snow and sleet tossed the 'chute about like a cork on a turbulent sea. The constant jerk and swing nauseated me severely.

As I rapidly dropped, the snow turned to a violent downpour of rain, filling me with apprehension lest my 'chute collapse. The most appalling thought, however, was the realization that I was so completely lost I did not even know whether I was coming down on land or water. I knew that if I landed in water I would be pulled under by my heavy accouterments, and would surely drown. I kept straining my eyes in an attempt to see where and on what I was landing, but it was not until I was within eight or nine hundred feet of the ground that I could see it through the rain and mist. Then, to my great relief, I could see giant cacti and realized that I was landing on firm ground. I was dropping very rapidly and I attempted to guide the 'chute by pulling on the shroud-lines toward a dry wash that appeared to be the best place to land. However, I partially collapsed the 'chute in my attempt, just as a down-draft of air caught us, and I fell the last twenty or twenty-five feet—striking the ground at the same time as my 'chute. I was on the down-swing when the 'chute collapsed and, as a result, I was knocked unconscious by the terrific force with which I struck.

The beating of the rain on my cheek revived me about twenty minutes later. I was lying face downward with both arms stretched out in front of me. The first thing I was conscious of was a sharp pain in my hands, and I discovered that they had struck in a small barrel cactus. My hands were a bloody mass and the thorns had pierced them in such a manner that I was unable to remove my heavy flying gloves. My back and right side had struck on some rocks and I was afraid that I was permanently injured. Although every movement brought excruciating pain I was able, after an agonizing struggle, to release myself from the parachute, but try as I would, I was unable to remove my flying-suit. I finally succeeded in reaching inside the suit and pulling my belt up as tightly as possible to alleviate as much pain as possible. Then I scratched my initials in the ground with the toe of my boot, and an arrow indicating the direction I would take. I had landed on the side of a mountain that sloped down to a tempting green valley and a winding river, and I started my slow and painful steps in that direction. My progress was necessarily slow, due not only to my injuries, but also to my cumbersome apparel. Although I stopped frequently to rest I did not dare to sit down for fear that I would never be able to get up again.

After staggering along for an indefinite length of time with my mind practically in a stupor, I finally reached the river. How I managed to wade that swollen storm-fed stream in my flying-suit will always be a mystery to me. But I did cross it, and staggered fully a mile farther, to fall exhausted on the threshold of a Mexican hovel.

I finally succeeded in explaining by gestures to the frightened inmates (none of whom could speak or understand a word of English) what had happened to me and where I had come from. I succeeded in allaying their fears to some extent, and they lifted me and carried me inside, where they deposited my battered body in front of a glowing fire. After covering me with a dirty piece of canvas they sat around and impassively waited for me to die.

Sometime later I was roused by the sound of a car from the lethargy into which I had fallen. There followed some rapid and excited Mexican conversation and then in walked three white men. To my joy they brought word from Lieutenant Sloan, who was at Stuart's Ranch, about nine miles distant, anxiously awaiting word from me.

IN the car on the way to the ranch I learned of the events that had taken place since I had jumped. Immediately after I had jumped Lieutenant Sloan had climbed out onto the step and was about to follow me when he had suddenly seen a break in the clouds directly below him. He had climbed back into the ship, turned on the gas and switches, started the motor (the ship was equipped with an electric starter) and brought the ship safely down at Stuart's Ranch, approximately fifty-eight miles north of Tucson, Arizona. He had given the alarm at once and ranchers had been looking for me ever since.

Thirty minutes later we were at the ranch, where we picked up Lieutenant Sloan and continued on to a hospital. A few days later I discovered that, outside of a harrowing experience, the total amount of damage done was (personal) four broken ribs and two badly lacerated hands, and (governmental) one parachute lost.

One Night in Zanzibar

Mr. Smith is now a professional guide for hunting parties, but at the time of this desperate encounter he was a sailor-man.

By
W. D. Smith

FIVE years of ramming around the South Seas and the Indian Ocean is bound to give a man some exciting experiences to look back on. My time down there gave me plenty; for then I was a firm believer in my own luck and depended on it to get me out of any difficulty it swept me into. A pretty hazardous and blind way of living, that—but it suited me well enough twelve years ago. I stuck fairly close to the sea, and most of the really stirring things in my life overtook me on the storm-lashed decks of small sailing-vessels. But this night in Zanzibar was a bit different. The ship was there all right, but the storm was missing. But in place of wind and heavy water, there was a blanket of fog and a dhow-cluttered harbor and a British gunboat and the turbaned Sikh police of Zanzibar. And on top of that, the most reckless sea captain I have ever had the misfortune—or fortune—of meeting.

This captain—to hide his identity I'll call him Bertaud, though that was not his name—that night unintentionally killed an Arab. At the time it happened, I was eating a lonely dinner of goat curry and rice in one of the little tea gardens in the Arab quarter. A lantern hung in an acacia tree over my table and dimly lit the small, high-walled court around me. I was the only diner in the garden. The bandy-legged Indian proprietor had brought my food and disappeared into a back room of the place. Then suddenly an uproar of shouts sounded from another back room, and I heard some one throw his weight against the door leading to the garden.

There was a fight on inside. I didn't have to guess at that—and furthermore, I had no intention of getting pulled into it. I got up to leave right then; but before I could move a step the rear door burst open with a rending crash and a tangled knot of fighting men poured into the garden. There were four Arabs in white robes and one white man—Captain Bertaud, I later learned. He came first, his back toward me and a bottle in either hand. He swung the bottles like an expert, seeming to parry a dozen Arab knives at once. He dropped one tall Mohammedan his own length away on the floor, and turned to make a run for the street gate. But he must have got tangled in his own long legs, for he stumbled backward and fell right at my feet, and after him bounded the Arabs, yelling madly.

It was murder, pure and simple, and I still think I was right in grabbing up my chair and getting into it. I knocked the first Arab down, but he was up again like a coil spring and coming at us with the other two. I say "us," because Bertraud was on his feet by that time, and standing in close to me with his bottles ready. It was the first time I had ever faced a knife wielded in cold blood, and I remember it gave me a sort of desperate strength where my blows with the chair were concerned.

Then it was a swift, silent struggle, with the Arabs stabbing in like mad—and us hitting out hard to keep the knives from our ribs. The whole thing couldn't have lasted more than a minute, but when the last Arab went down he was a dead man. It took only half an eye to see that Bertaud's bottle had caved in his skull fatally. In the sudden silence that fell over the tea garden, the Indian proprietor scuttled out of hiding somewhere and ran for the street. His cries of *"Murder!"* and *"Police!"* threw me into a panic, for I suddenly realized just how bad my position would look to the Sikh police and the Sultan of Zanzibar. But Bertaud was calm enough.

He knelt down and felt for the Arab's pulse; then he rose hastily and handed me one of the bottles.

"Have you a ship, my friend?" he panted. I guess he saw from my clothes that I was a seaman. I told him that I had jumped my ship three days earlier and hadn't a friend in the port. Yells and the shrill blast of a Sikh's whistle sounded down the street. Bertaud grabbed my arm.

"Come on!" he cried, and tore into a big bougainvillea vine that ran up to the flat roof at the rear of the court. I climbed after him, my heart in my mouth. As I threw myself over the plastered parapet to the roof, I caught a glimpse of three tall Sikhs in turbans and khaki shorts dashing into the garden below. Then I was off at Bertaud's heels, running blind in the dark, and tumbling from one roof to another in a mad race for the harbor.

Except for the minaret-topped mosques, warehouses and

buildings in the British city, Zanzibar is a continuous huddle of flat roofs, divided by streets of the narrowest kind. These roofs might be traveled well enough in the daylight, but under a starless sky they present a thousand obstacles for men in a hurry.

Bertaud leaped off into a pitchy black alley, and as I followed him, a shot crashed out behind me and a bullet splattered plaster over my head and shoulders. At the bottom Bertaud grabbed me and whisked me away in the dark. We pounded down a yard-wide lane, scraped through a gateway, stumbled across a foul-smelling court, swung to a balcony and across another tier of roofs, and to the ground again.

I was out of breath, but the blasts of police whistles behind us kept Bertaud on the dead run. We rushed past a few late stragglers, all that nightfall leaves of the polyglot crowds that jam Zanzibar's streets in daytime, and kept on for the beach. My guide seemed to know where he was going; presently we came out on the sand and to a beached dinghy with a black sailor sleeping across the thwarts. Bertaud shook him awake and a minute later we were pulling like mad into as thick a fog-bank as ever I have felt.

"Lay into it, my friend!" panted Bertaud.

And I did. But for the life of me I couldn't see what good it would do us to get on board a ship. The Sikhs were bound to get enough information from the tea-garden proprietor to know we were both sailors. They would search every vessel in the harbor before morning, and warn the British gunboat anchored outside to watch for any craft trying to leave the harbor. Only a madman would try to move his ship in a fog such as bound the harbor now, for ships and Arab dhows lay at anchor on every side. But presently a riding-light showed dimly above us and we were swinging up a ladder to the deck of a sailing-vessel, a ketch-rigged ship of some ninety feet, with auxiliary power.

No sooner were we on board than I knew Bertaud was captain there. He snapped out a low-voiced order to a black mate who came running aft, and I knew enough French to understand that the shackles were to be knocked out of our cable at once. We were going to make a run for it in the fog! The idea thrilled me to my shoes, but how Bertaud planned doing it was more than I could figure out. Aside from the hazards of fog and anchored ships all around us, there was the danger of the English gunboat getting our number. That made it utterly impossible to use noisy motors getting out, and of course, with the fog, there wasn't even a thimbleful of wind for our sails. It stumped me completely, and I told Bertaud so as we swung the dinghy up into her chocks.

"My friend,"—he laughed cautiously,—"when you have been in and out of this harbor as often as I have, you will not ask for sails or engines when the prison gates are open for you! Right now the tide is at full ebb and the current from behind Zanzibar Island runs out strong under us—and that makes fair sailing for men like us, eh?"

I HAD his plan in a flash. We were slipping our cable, dousing all lights, and trusting the current to carry us out past the gunboat and into a streak of wind offshore. And if the reader knows shipmasters as I do, he will have some idea of how flabbergasted I was to hear such a mad plan from this Captain Bertaud.

The whine of a harbor-patrol siren cut through the fog from the beach, and on the tail of its sound came the muffled splash of our ship's cable as it parted and plunged to the bottom. Then we were slipping away stern-first into the blanketing fog. Without a light, without a sound, at first with hardly a motion of her decks, the ship fell into the full grip of the fast-running current. And as she went, she gathered a strangely terrible momentum in her timbers that threatened disaster to herself and to everything that might lie in her blind path.

From the moment we went adrift, it was all touch and go with us and the ship. The black mate was aloft in the rigging trying to keep some kind of lookout; Bertaud was holding down the poop, and I lay out along the cat-heads, sweating, listening to my heart pound, and trying to pierce the gloom around me. For aside from the moaning harbor-patrol siren, a dozen perils crouched in our blind path. At any moment we might ram disastrously into an anchored dhow. The fog might lift suddenly and reveal our unlawful flight from the harbor. We might run aground on some bar—or, worst of all, we might blunder into the very guns of the Britisher.

Suddenly, as I lay there, tense and perspiring, my straining ears caught the sound of something bumping against the hull aft of me. My heart leaped into my throat. Had we struck a small boat swinging beside another ship? Were we about to crash into that ship in the next second? I leaped to my feet, trembling, bracing myself for the shock of a collision. But it did not come. And I realized that all we had struck was some piece of flotsam brought out by the tide.

BUT the thing brought home to me the full meaning of the risk we ran—for there was no guessing where the ketch was bound or how she rode. The current swung her this way and that; spun her slowly in its flexible fingers; bore her along in its ponderous clutches like a bee in a bathtub. Fortunately there was no sea running to speak of, because, calm as the water was, it tossed the vessel's tall masts back and forward through the wet fog in ever-increasing arcs.

Once we ran in so close to an anchored vessel that, though the fog veiled her lights completely, I could plainly hear the voices of men on her decks. And that time I held my breath with good reason. But the voices died out behind us, and the minutes slipped by in silence again, as the ketch continued to drift out on a clear path. Presently the angry drone of the siren was only a whisper far astern of us, and I began to feel that we had played our luck and won, so far. I was about to drop back to the poop, when I felt a touch on my leg and turned round to see the glow of a cigarette behind me. It was Bertaud, and there was a decidedly reckless and, as I thought, admirable quality in his low laugh. We exchanged names then, and he thanked me sincerely for having saved his life.

"*Sacre!*" he laughed. "We are not what you would call old friends, but we have had some fun together, eh? But damn, it has cost me an anchor and five fathoms of new cable! And still we are not what you would call safe. We need a breeze and a star to get the horizon between us and that gunboat before morning!"

We got the breeze soon enough; it whisked the fog away from our faces, even while we were talking there in the bows. I tailed on with the Malagasy crew, shaking the reefs out of her sails. A bank of stars opened up overhead and soon we were under a full spread and flying two feathers of phosphorus off our bows.

Zanzibar and the gunboat and the Sikh police were left behind in our wake—but all the things that have happened to me since have failed to dim that exciting memory.

A fifth prize story of Real Experience appears on pages 4 and 5 of this issue. Conditions governing these stories will be found on page 3.

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Flame *in the* Forest

By HAROLD TITUS

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